Hector Sevilla and Mike S. Miller's

Lullaby

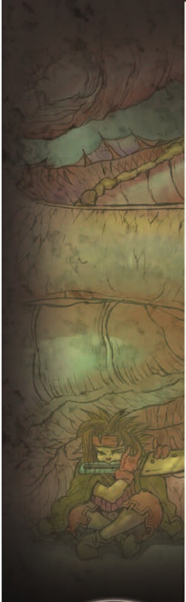
ONCE UPON A TIME...

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

LULLABY:ONCE UPON A TIME... THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

AVERY · SEVILLA

ALIAS



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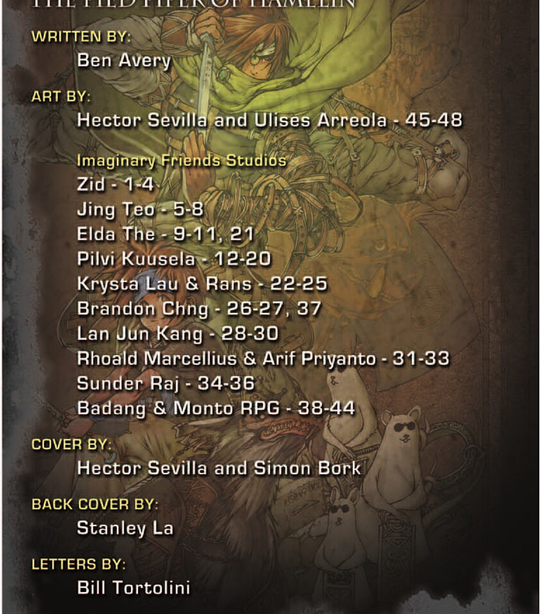

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LULLABY: ONCE UPON A TIME...THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN - GRAPHIC NOVEL, DECEMBER 2005. First Printing. Published by Alias Enterprises LLC. Office of Publication: 8367 Lemon Avenue, La Mesa, CA 91941.

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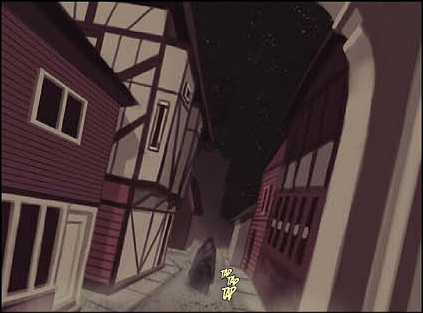
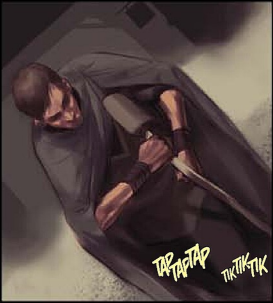
Printed in Korea.

Prologue

In which an old
plague is resurrected
and an old agreement
is broken.

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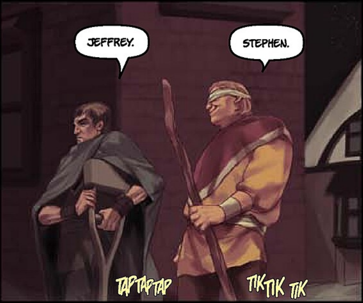
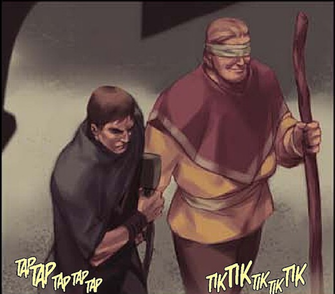
TIK TIK TIK


JEFFREY.
STEPHEN.
TAP TAP TAP
TIK TIK TIK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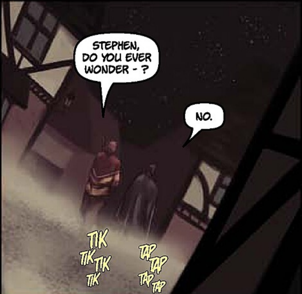
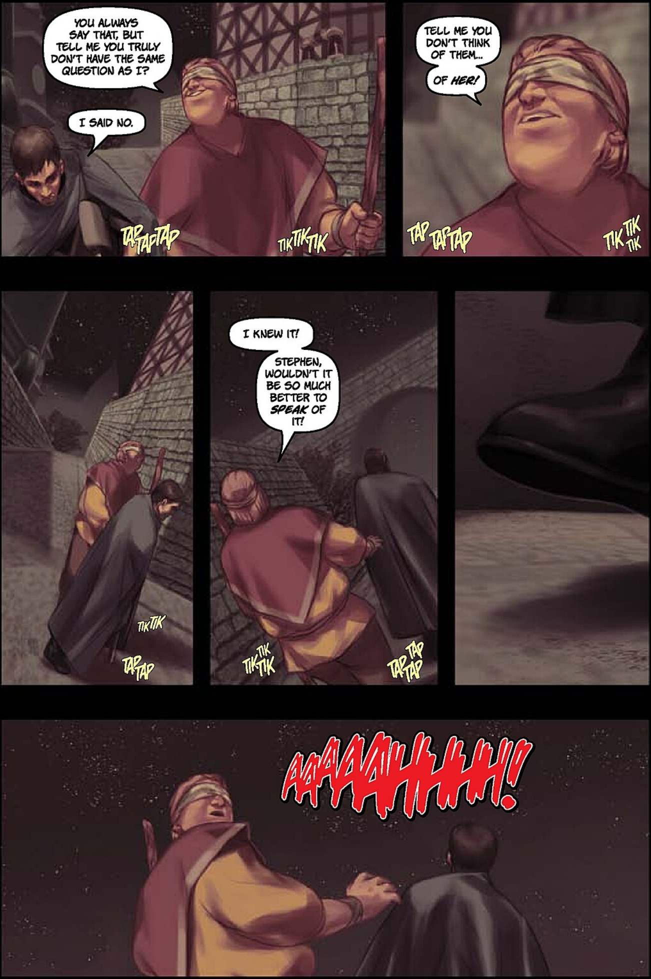
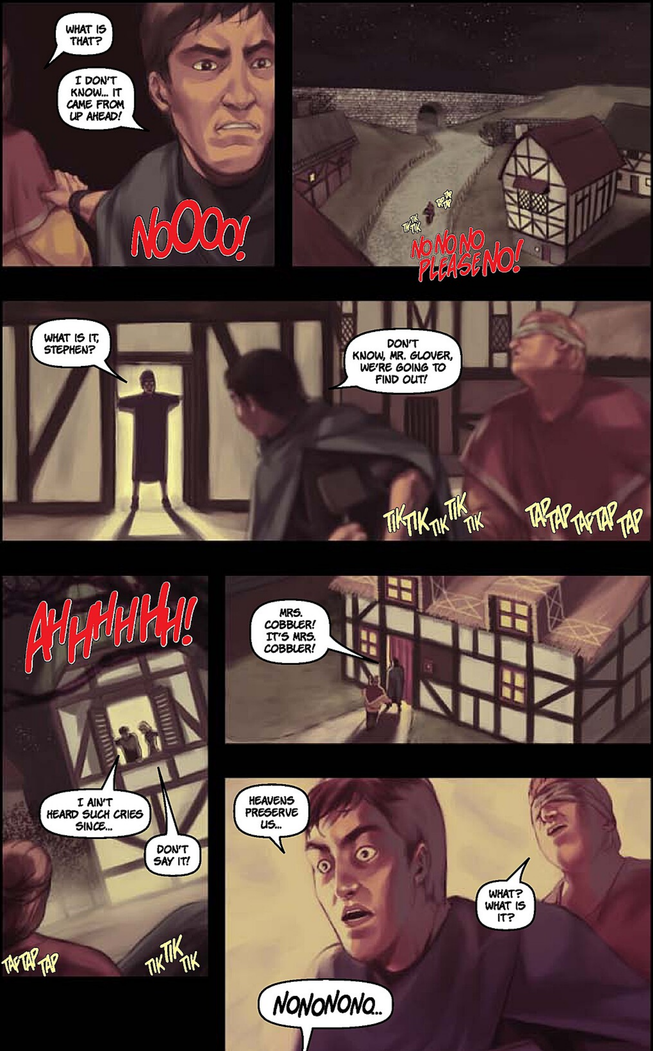
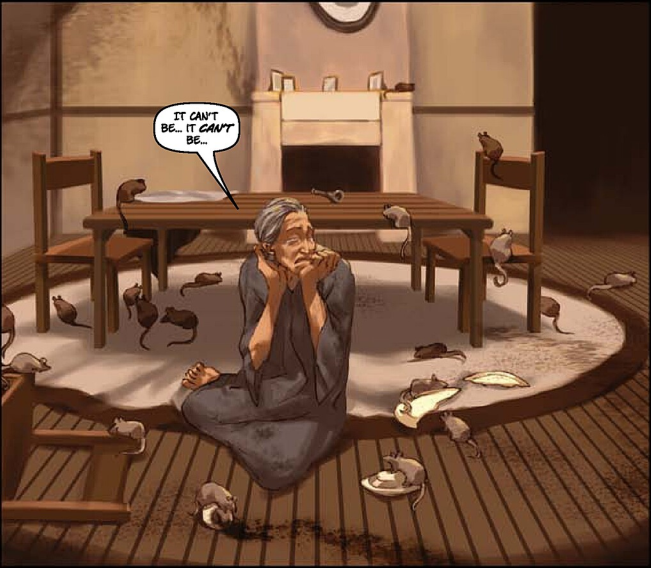
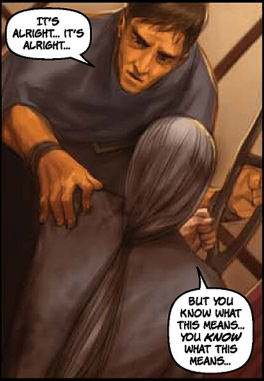
TIK TIK TIK TIK TIK

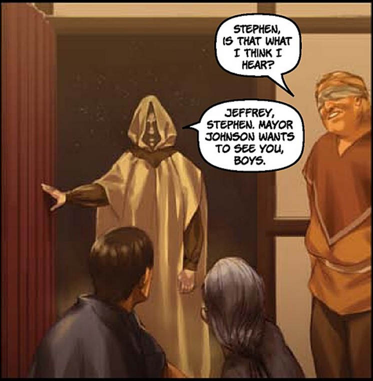

STEPHEN, DO YOU EVER WONDER - ?
NO.
TIK TIK TIK TIK
TAP TAP TAP TAP


YOU ALWAYS SAY THAT, BUT TELL ME YOU TRULY DON'T HAVE THE SAME QUESTION AS I?
I SAID NO.
TAP TAP TAP
TIK TIK TIK
TELL ME YOU DON'T THINK OF THEM...
OF *HER!*
TAP TAP TAP
TIK TIK TIK
TIK TIK
TAP TAP
I KNEW IT!
STEPHEN, WOULDN'T IT BE SO MUCH BETTER TO *SPEAK* OF IT!
TIK TIK TIK
TAP TAP TAP
AAAAAAHHHHHH!


WHAT IS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW... IT CAME FROM UP AHEAD!
NOOOO!
TAP TAP TAP
TIK TIK TIK
NO NO NO PLEASE NO!
WHAT IS IT, STEPHEN?
DON'T KNOW, MR. GLOVER, WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT!
TIK TIK TIK TIK TIK
TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP
AHHHHHH!
I AIN'T HEARD SUCH CRIES SINCE...
DON'T SAY IT!
TAP TAP TAP
TIK TIK TIK
MRS. COBBLER! IT'S MRS. COBBLER!
HEAVENS PRESERVE US...
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
NONONONO..

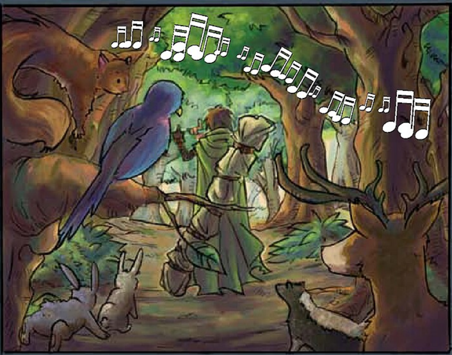

IT CAN'T BE... IT *CAN'T* BE...

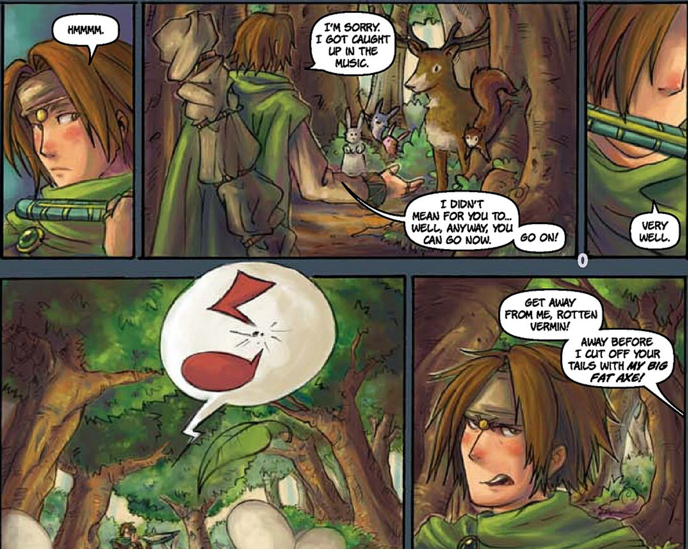

IT'S ALRIGHT... IT'S ALRIGHT...
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS... YOU *KNOW* WHAT THIS MEANS...

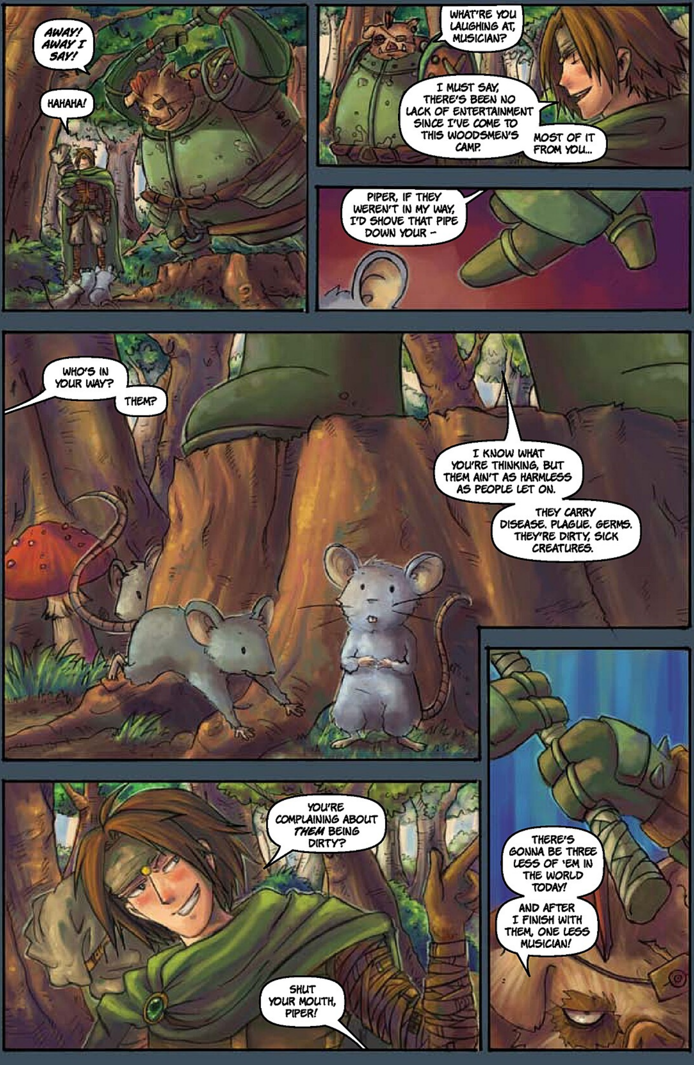

STEPHEN, IS THAT WHAT I THINK I HEAR?
JEFFREY, STEPHEN. MAYOR JOHNSON WANTS TO SEE YOU, BOYS.

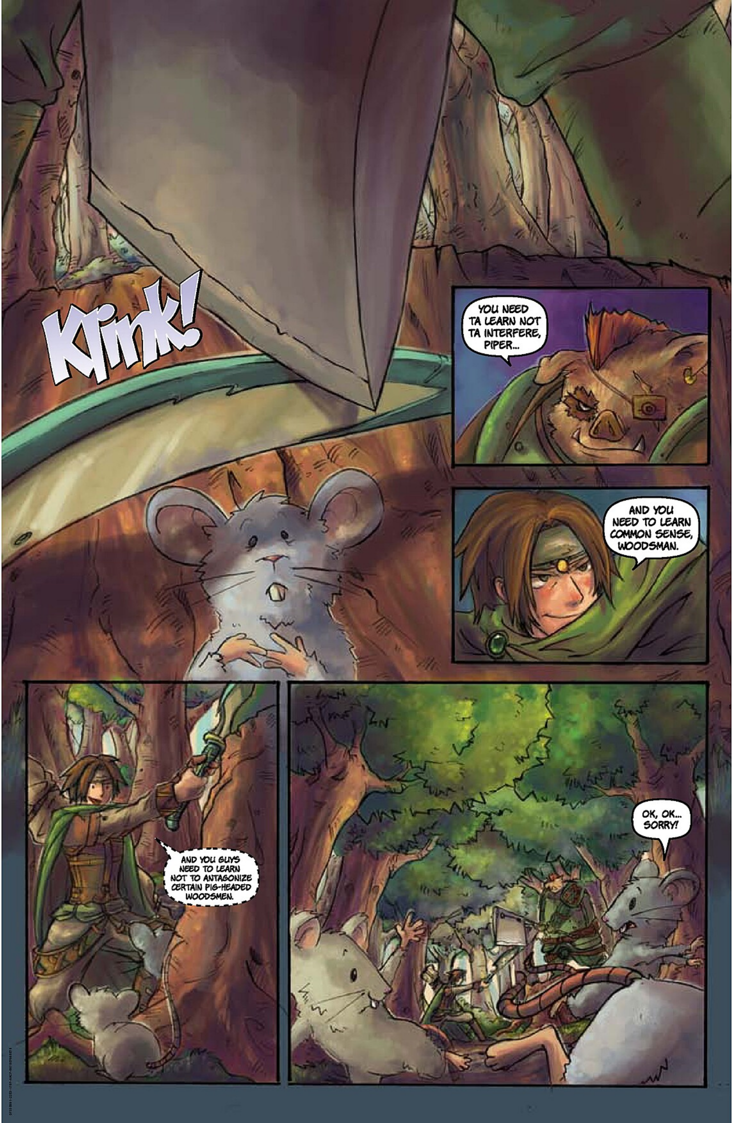
Part the first:

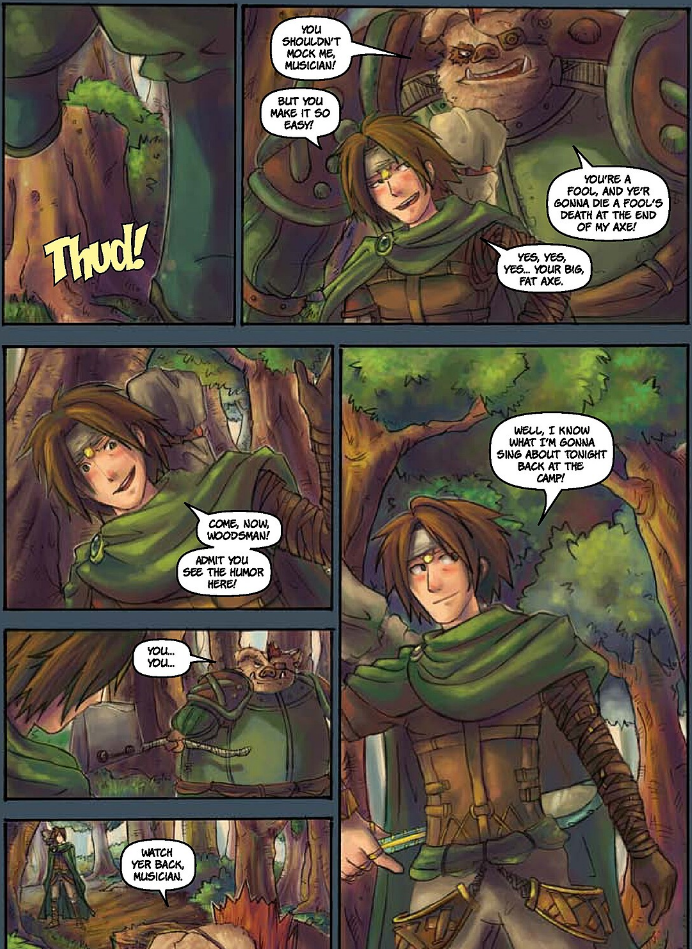
In Which Events Are Set in Motion that Will Play Out Another Day.




HMMMM.
I'M SORRY. I GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE MUSIC.
I DIDN'T MEAN FOR YOU TO... WELL, ANYWAY, YOU CAN GO NOW.
GO ON!
VERY WELL.
GET AWAY FROM ME, ROTTEN VERMIN!
AWAY BEFORE I CUT OFF YOUR TAILS WITH *MY BIG FAT AXE!*
OH PLEASE, NOT AGAIN.

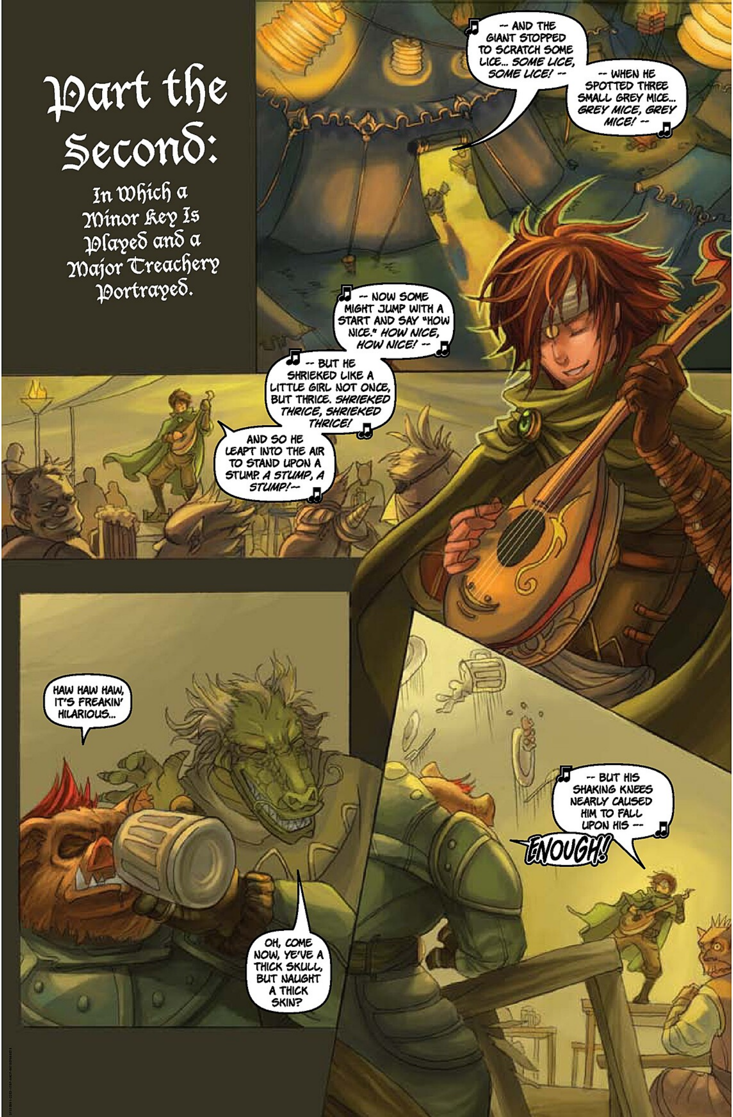

AWAY! AWAY I SAY!
HAHAHA!
WHAT'RE YOU LAUGHING AT, MUSICIAN?
I MUST SAY, THERE'S BEEN NO LACK OF ENTERTAINMENT SINCE I'VE COME TO THIS WOODSMEN'S CAMP.
MOST OF IT FROM YOU...
PIPER, IF THEY WEREN'T IN MY WAY, I'D SHOVE THAT PIPE DOWN YOUR –
WHO'S IN YOUR WAY?
THEM?
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, BUT THEM AIN'T AS HARMLESS AS PEOPLE LET ON.
THEY CARRY DISEASE. PLAGUE. GERMS. THEY'RE DIRTY, SICK CREATURES.
YOU'RE COMPLAINING ABOUT *THEM* BEING DIRTY?
SHUT YOUR MOUTH, PIPER!
THERE'S GONNA BE THREE LESS OF 'EM IN THE WORLD TODAY!
AND AFTER I FINISH WITH THEM, ONE LESS MUSICIAN!

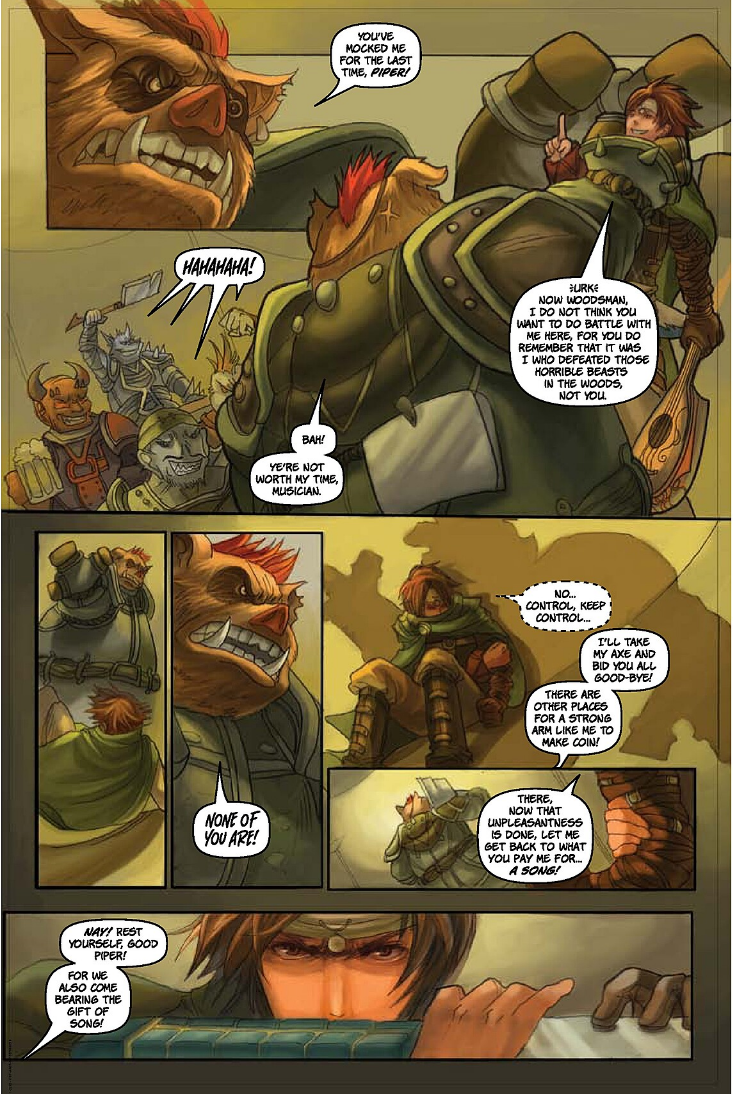

KRINK!
YOU NEED TA LEARN NOT TA INTERFERE, PIPER...
AND YOU NEED TO LEARN COMMON SENSE, WOODSMAN.
AND YOU GUYS NEED TO LEARN NOT TO ANTAGONIZE CERTAIN PIG-HEADED WOODSMEN.
OK, OK... SORRY!

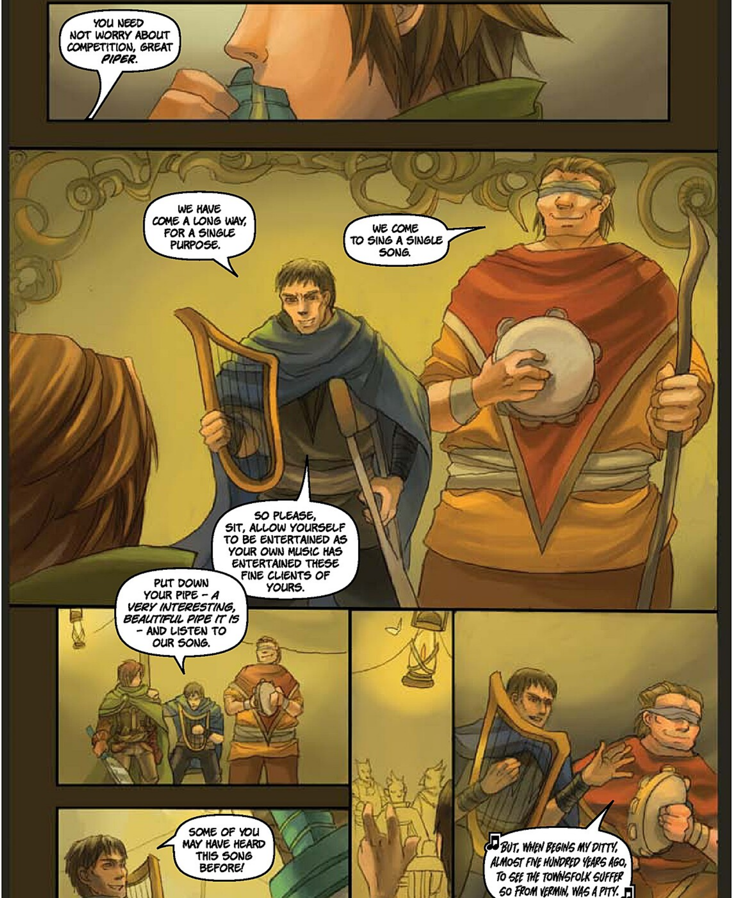

Thud!
YOU SHOULDN'T MOCK ME, MUSICIAN!
BUT YOU MAKE IT SO EASY!
YOU'RE A FOOL, AND YE'R GONNA DIE A FOOL'S DEATH AT THE END OF MY AXE!
YES, YES, YES... YOUR BIG, FAT AXE.
COME, NOW, WOODSMAN!
ADMIT YOU SEE THE HUMOR HERE!
WELL, I KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA SING ABOUT TONIGHT BACK AT THE CAMP!
YOU... YOU...
WATCH YER BACK, MUSICIAN.

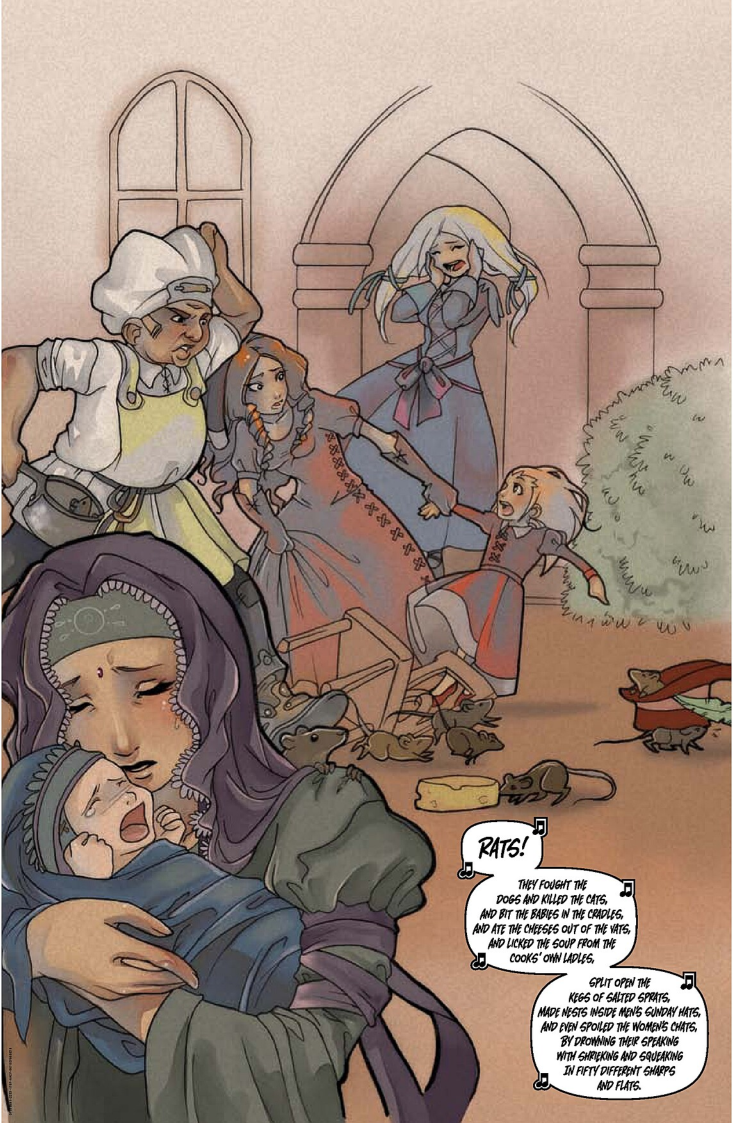
Part the Second:

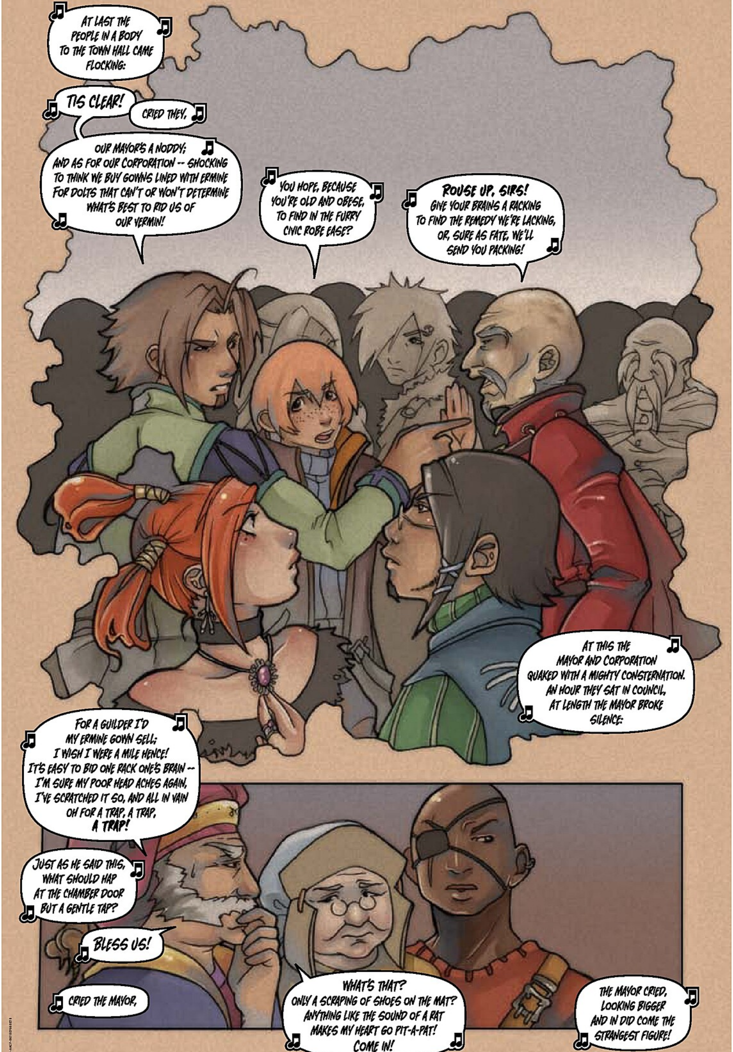
In Which a Minor Key Is Played and a Major Treachery Portrayed.

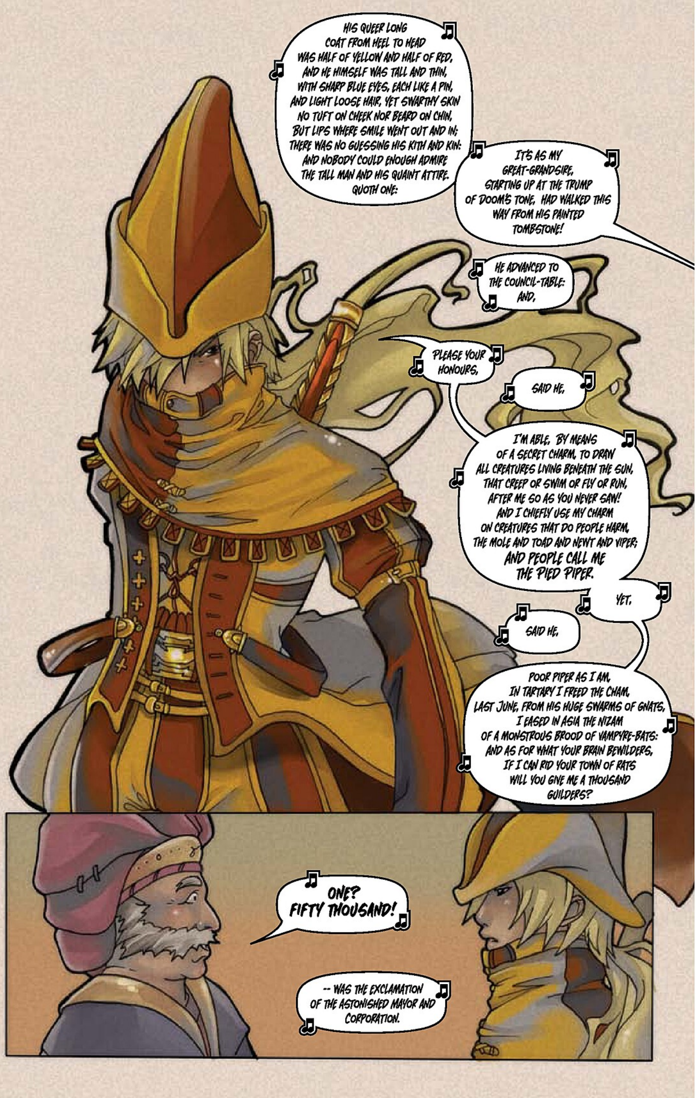

-- AND THE GIANT STOPPED TO SCRATCH SOME LICE... *SOME LICE, SOME LICE!* --
-- WHEN HE SPOTTED THREE SMALL GREY MICE... *GREY MICE, GREY MICE!* --
-- NOW SOME MIGHT JUMP WITH A START AND SAY "HOW NICE." *HOW NICE, HOW NICE!* --
-- BUT HE SHRIEKED LIKE A LITTLE GIRL NOT ONCE, BUT THRICE. *SHRIEKED THRICE, SHRIEKED THRICE!*
AND SO HE LEAPT INTO THE AIR TO STAND UPON A STUMP. *A STUMP, A STUMP!*--
HAW HAW HAW, IT'S FREAKIN' HILARIOUS...
OH, COME NOW, YE'VE A THICK SKULL, BUT NAUGHT A THICK SKIN?
-- BUT HIS SHAKING KNEES NEARLY CAUSED HIM TO FALL UPON HIS --
ENOUGH!

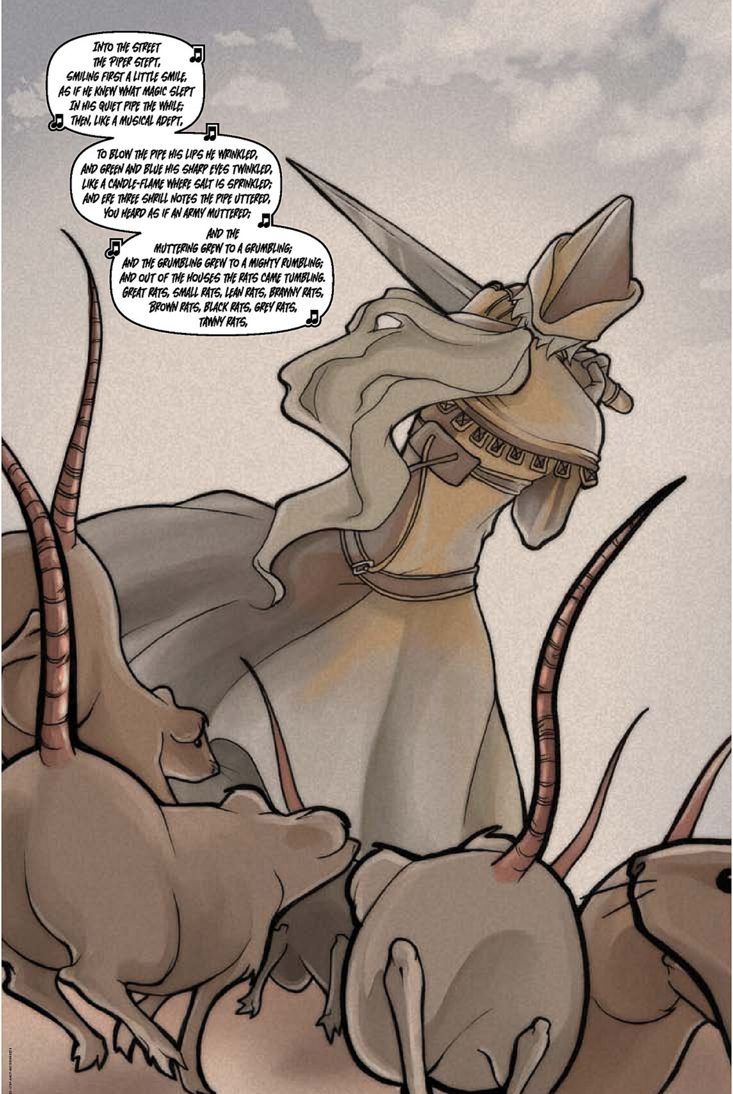

YOU'VE MOCKED ME FOR THE LAST TIME, *PIPER!*
HAHAHAHA!
≷URK≶ NOW WOODSMAN, I DO NOT THINK YOU WANT TO DO BATTLE WITH ME HERE, FOR YOU DO REMEMBER THAT IT WAS I WHO DEFEATED THOSE HORRIBLE BEASTS IN THE WOODS, NOT YOU.
BAH!
YE'RE NOT WORTH MY TIME, MUSICIAN.
NONE OF YOU ARE!
NO... CONTROL, KEEP CONTROL...
I'LL TAKE MY AXE AND BID YOU ALL GOOD-BYE!
THERE ARE OTHER PLACES FOR A STRONG ARM LIKE ME TO MAKE COIN!
THERE, NOW THAT UNPLEASANTNESS IS DONE, LET ME GET BACK TO WHAT YOU PAY ME FOR... *A SONG!*
NAY! REST YOURSELF, GOOD PIPER!
FOR WE ALSO COME BEARING THE GIFT OF SONG!

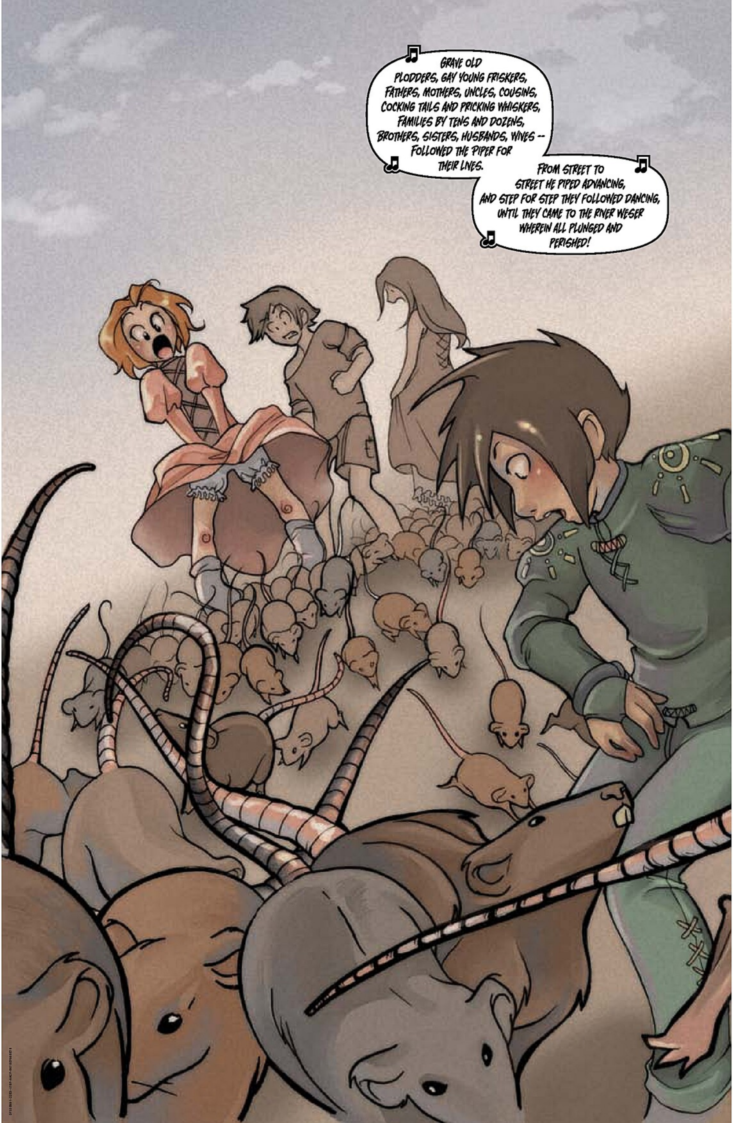

YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT COMPETITION, GREAT *PIPER*.
WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY, FOR A SINGLE PURPOSE.
WE COME TO SING A SINGLE SONG.
SO PLEASE, SIT, ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE ENTERTAINED AS YOUR OWN MUSIC HAS ENTERTAINED THESE FINE CLIENTS OF YOURS.
PUT DOWN YOUR PIPE – A *VERY INTERESTING, BEAUTIFUL PIPE IT IS* – AND LISTEN TO OUR SONG.
SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THIS SONG BEFORE!
♫ HAMELIN TOWN'S IN BRUNSWICK, BY FAMOUS HANOVER CITY; THE RIVER WESER, DEEP AND WIDE, WASHES ITS WALL ON THE SOUTHERN SIDE; PLEASANTER SPOT YOU NEVER SPIED; ♫
♫ BUT, WHEN BEGINS MY DITTY, ALMOST FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, TO SEE THE TOWNSFOLK SUFFER SO FROM VERMIN, WAS A PITY. ♫

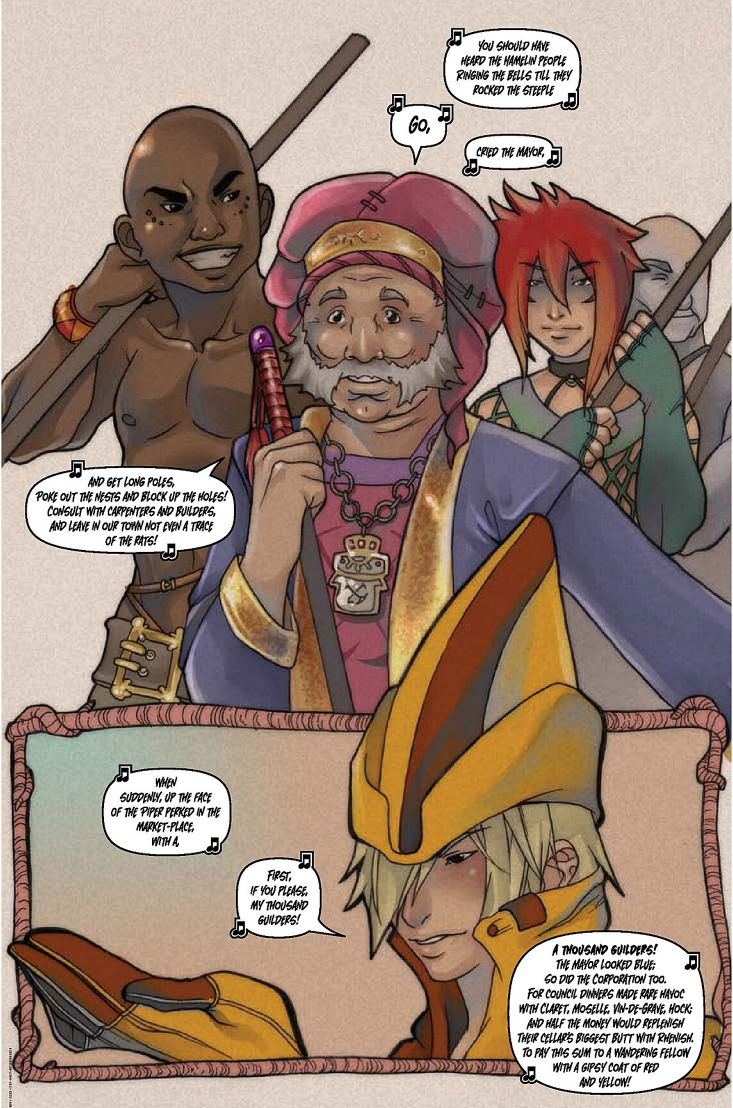

RATS!
THEY FOUGHT THE DOGS AND KILLED THE CATS, AND BIT THE BABIES IN THE CRADLES, AND ATE THE CHEESES OUT OF THE VATS, AND LICKED THE SOUP FROM THE COOKS' OWN LADLES,
SPLIT OPEN THE KEGS OF SALTED SPRATS, MADE NESTS INSIDE MEN'S SUNDAY HATS, AND EVEN SPOILED THE WOMEN'S CHATS, BY DROWNING THEIR SPEAKING WITH SHRIEKING AND SQUEAKING IN FIFTY DIFFERENT SHARPS AND FLATS.

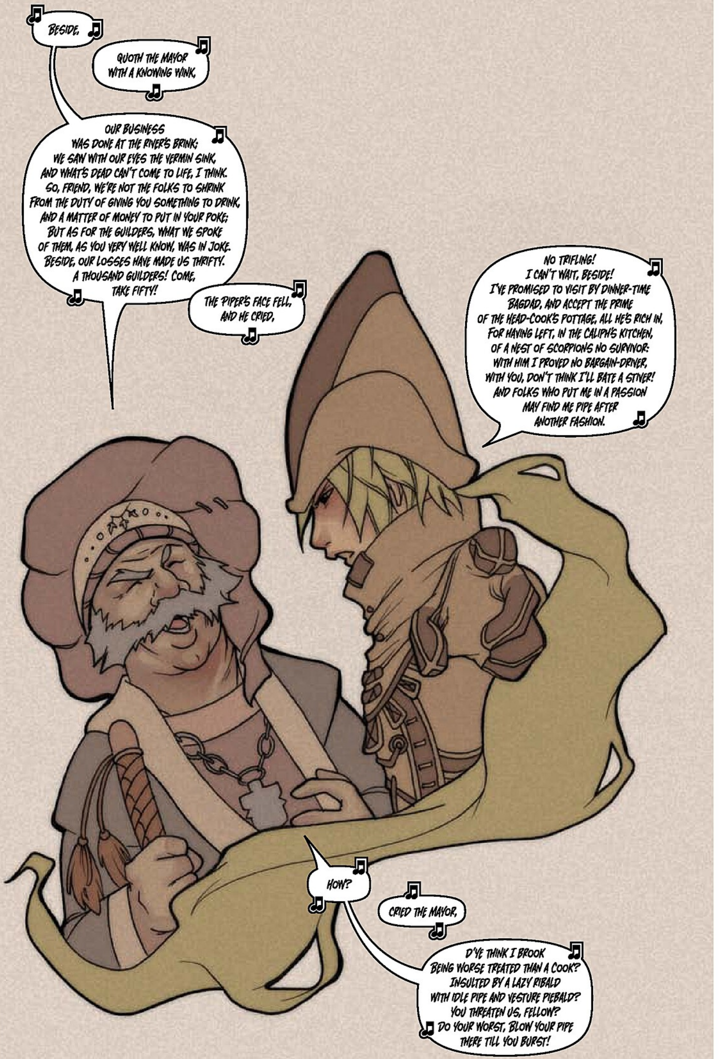

AT LAST THE PEOPLE IN A BODY TO THE TOWN HALL CAME FLOCKING:
'TIS CLEAR!
CRIED THEY,
OUR MAYOR'S A NODDY; AND AS FOR OUR CORPORATION -- SHOCKING TO THINK WE BUY GOWNS LINED WITH ERMINE FOR DOLTS THAT CAN'T OR WON'T DETERMINE WHAT'S BEST TO RID US OF OUR VERMIN!
YOU HOPE, BECAUSE YOU'RE OLD AND OBESE, TO FIND IN THE FURRY CIVIC ROBE EASE?
ROUSE UP, SIRS! GIVE YOUR BRAINS A RACKING TO FIND THE REMEDY WE'RE LACKING, OR, SURE AS FATE, WE'LL SEND YOU PACKING!
AT THIS THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION QUAKED WITH A MIGHTY CONSTERNATION. AN HOUR THEY SAT IN COUNCIL, AT LENGTH THE MAYOR BROKE SILENCE:
FOR A GUILDER I'D MY ERMINE GOWN SELL; I WISH I WERE A MILE HENCE! IT'S EASY TO BID ONE RACK ONE'S BRAIN -- I'M SURE MY POOR HEAD ACHES AGAIN, I'VE SCRATCHED IT SO, AND ALL IN VAIN OH FOR A TRAP, A TRAP, A TRAP!
JUST AS HE SAID THIS, WHAT SHOULD HAP AT THE CHAMBER DOOR BUT A GENTLE TAP?
BLESS US!
CRIED THE MAYOR,
WHAT'S THAT? ONLY A SCRAPING OF SHOES ON THE MAT? ANYTHING LIKE THE SOUND OF A RAT MAKES MY HEART GO PIT-A-PAT! COME IN!
THE MAYOR CRIED, LOOKING BIGGER AND IN DID COME THE STRANGEST FIGURE!

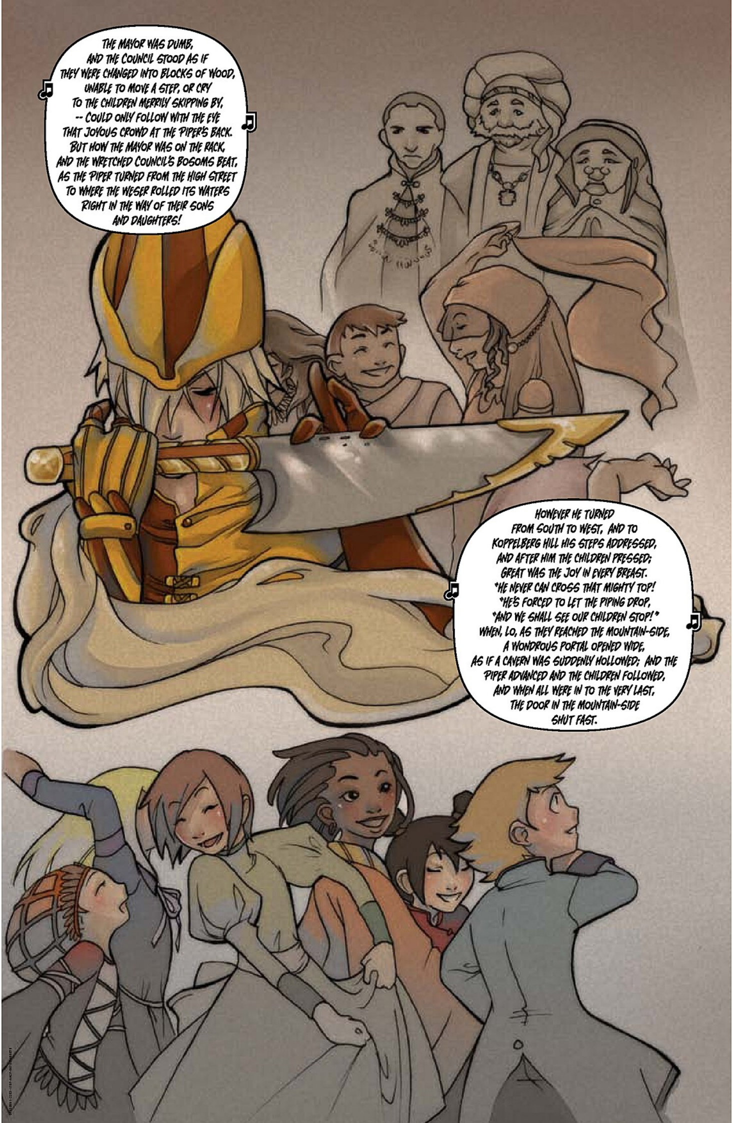

HIS QUEER LONG COAT FROM HEEL TO HEAD WAS HALF OF YELLOW AND HALF OF RED, AND HE HIMSELF WAS TALL AND THIN, WITH SHARP BLUE EYES, EACH LIKE A PIN, AND LIGHT LOOSE HAIR, YET SWARTHY SKIN NO TUFT ON CHEEK NOR BEARD ON CHIN, BUT LIPS WHERE SMILE WENT OUT AND IN; THERE WAS NO GUESSING HIS KITH AND KIN: AND NOBODY COULD ENOUGH ADMIRE THE TALL MAN AND HIS QUAINT ATTIRE. QUOTH ONE:
IT'S AS MY GREAT-GRANDSIRE, STARTING UP AT THE TRUMP OF DOOM'S TONE, HAD WALKED THIS WAY FROM HIS PAINTED TOMBSTONE!
HE ADVANCED TO THE COUNCIL-TABLE: AND,
PLEASE YOUR HONOURS,
SAID HE,
I'M ABLE, BY MEANS OF A SECRET CHARM, TO DRAW ALL CREATURES LIVING BENEATH THE SUN, THAT CREEP OR SWIM OR FLY OR RUN, AFTER ME SO AS YOU NEVER SAW! AND I CHIEFLY USE MY CHARM ON CREATURES THAT DO PEOPLE HARM, THE MOLE AND TOAD AND NEWT AND VIPER; AND PEOPLE CALL ME THE PIED PIPER.
YET,
SAID HE,
POOR PIPER AS I AM, IN TARTARY I FREED THE CHAM, LAST JUNE, FROM HIS HUGE SWARMS OF GNATS, I EASED IN ASIA THE NIZAM OF A MONSTROUS BROOD OF VAMPYRE-BATS: AND AS FOR WHAT YOUR BRAIN BEWILDERS, IF I CAN RID YOUR TOWN OF RATS WILL YOU GIVE ME A THOUSAND GUILDERS?
ONE? FIFTY THOUSAND!
-- WAS THE EXCLAMATION OF THE ASTONISHED MAYOR AND CORPORATION.

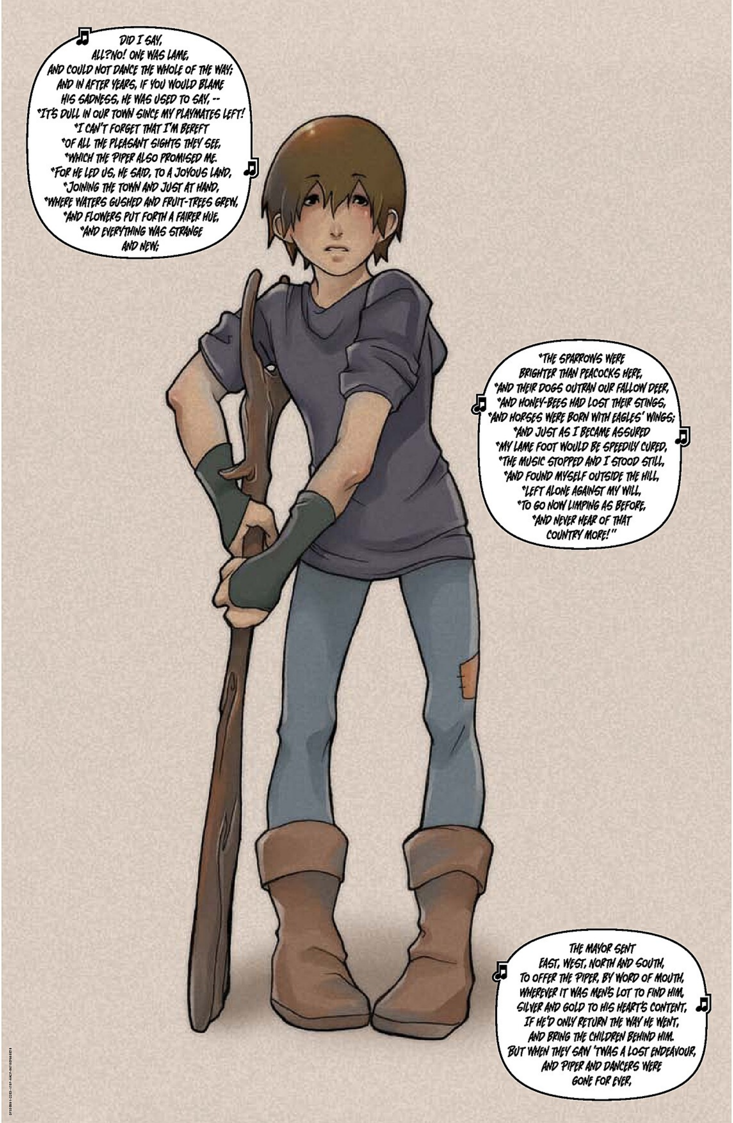

INTO THE STREET
THE PIPER STEPT,
SMILING FIRST A LITTLE SMILE,
AS IF HE KNEW WHAT MAGIC SLEPT
IN HIS QUIET PIPE THE WHILE;
THEN, LIKE A MUSICAL ADEPT,
TO BLOW THE PIPE HIS LIPS HE WRINKLED,
AND GREEN AND BLUE HIS SHARP EYES TWINKLED,
LIKE A CANDLE-FLAME WHERE SALT IS SPRINKLED;
AND ERE THREE SHRILL NOTES THE PIPE UTTERED,
YOU HEARD AS IF AN ARMY MUTTERED;
AND THE
MUTTERING GREW TO A GRUMBLING;
AND THE GRUMBLING GREW TO A MIGHTY RUMBLING;
AND OUT OF THE HOUSES THE RATS CAME TUMBLING.
GREAT RATS, SMALL RATS, LEAN RATS, BRAWNY RATS,
BROWN RATS, BLACK RATS, GREY RATS,
TAWNY RATS,

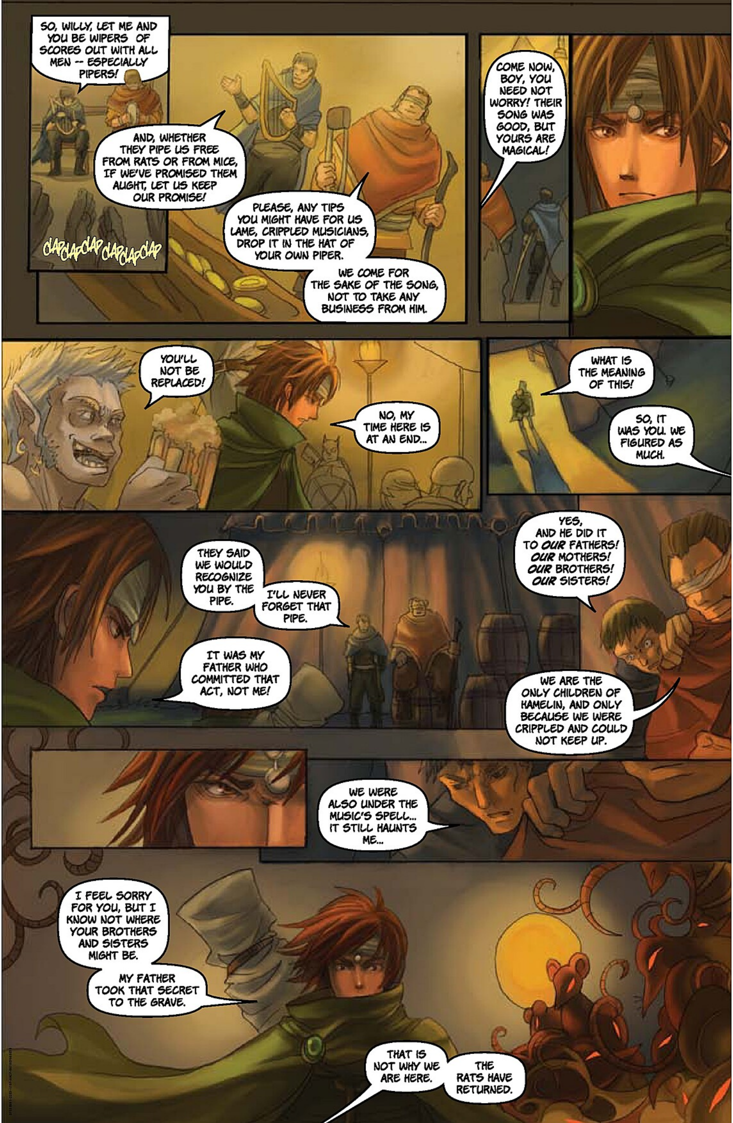

GRAVE OLD PLODDERS, GAY YOUNG FRISKERS, FATHERS, MOTHERS, UNCLES, COUSINS, COCKING TAILS AND PRICKING WHISKERS, FAMILIES BY TENS AND DOZENS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, HUSBANDS, WIVES -- FOLLOWED THE PIPER FOR THEIR LIVES.
FROM STREET TO STREET HE PIPED ADVANCING, AND STEP FOR STEP THEY FOLLOWED DANCING, UNTIL THEY CAME TO THE RIVER WESER WHEREIN ALL PLUNGED AND PERISHED!


YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD THE HAMELIN PEOPLE RINGING THE BELLS TILL THEY ROCKED THE STEEPLE
GO,
CRIED THE MAYOR,
AND GET LONG POLES, POKE OUT THE NESTS AND BLOCK UP THE HOLES! CONSULT WITH CARPENTERS AND BUILDERS, AND LEAVE IN OUR TOWN NOT EVEN A TRACE OF THE RATS!
WHEN SUDDENLY, UP THE FACE OF THE PIPER PERKED IN THE MARKET-PLACE, WITH A,
FIRST, IF YOU PLEASE, MY THOUSAND GUILDERS!
A THOUSAND GUILDERS! THE MAYOR LOOKED BLUE; SO DID THE CORPORATION TOO. FOR COUNCIL DINNERS MADE RARE HAVOC WITH CLARET, MOSELLE, VIN-DE-GRAVE, HOCK; AND HALF THE MONEY WOULD REPLENISH THEIR CELLAR'S BIGGEST BUTT WITH RHENISH. TO PAY THIS SUM TO A WANDERING FELLOW WITH A GIPSY COAT OF RED AND YELLOW!


BESIDE,
QUOTH THE MAYOR WITH A KNOWING WINK,
OUR BUSINESS WAS DONE AT THE RIVER'S BRINK; WE SAW WITH OUR EYES THE VERMIN SINK, AND WHAT'S DEAD CAN'T COME TO LIFE, I THINK. SO, FRIEND, WE'RE NOT THE FOLKS TO SHRINK FROM THE DUTY OF GIVING YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK, AND A MATTER OF MONEY TO PUT IN YOUR POKE; BUT AS FOR THE GUILDERS, WHAT WE SPOKE OF THEM, AS YOU VERY WELL KNOW, WAS IN JOKE. BESIDE, OUR LOSSES HAVE MADE US THRIFTY. A THOUSAND GUILDERS! COME, TAKE FIFTY!
THE PIPER'S FACE FELL, AND HE CRIED,
NO TRIFLING! I CAN'T WAIT, BESIDE! I'VE PROMISED TO VISIT BY DINNER-TIME BAGDAD, AND ACCEPT THE PRIME OF THE HEAD-COOK'S POTTAGE, ALL HE'S RICH IN, FOR HAVING LEFT, IN THE CALIPH'S KITCHEN, OF A NEST OF SCORPIONS NO SURVIVOR: WITH HIM I PROVED NO BARGAIN-DRIVER, WITH YOU, DON'T THINK I'LL BATE A STIVER! AND FOLKS WHO PUT ME IN A PASSION MAY FIND ME PIPE AFTER ANOTHER FASHION.
HOW?
CRIED THE MAYOR,
D'YE THINK I BROOK BEING WORSE TREATED THAN A COOK? INSULTED BY A LAZY RIBALD WITH IDLE PIPE AND VESTURE PIEBALD? YOU THREATEN US, FELLOW? DO YOUR WORST, BLOW YOUR PIPE THERE TILL YOU BURST!

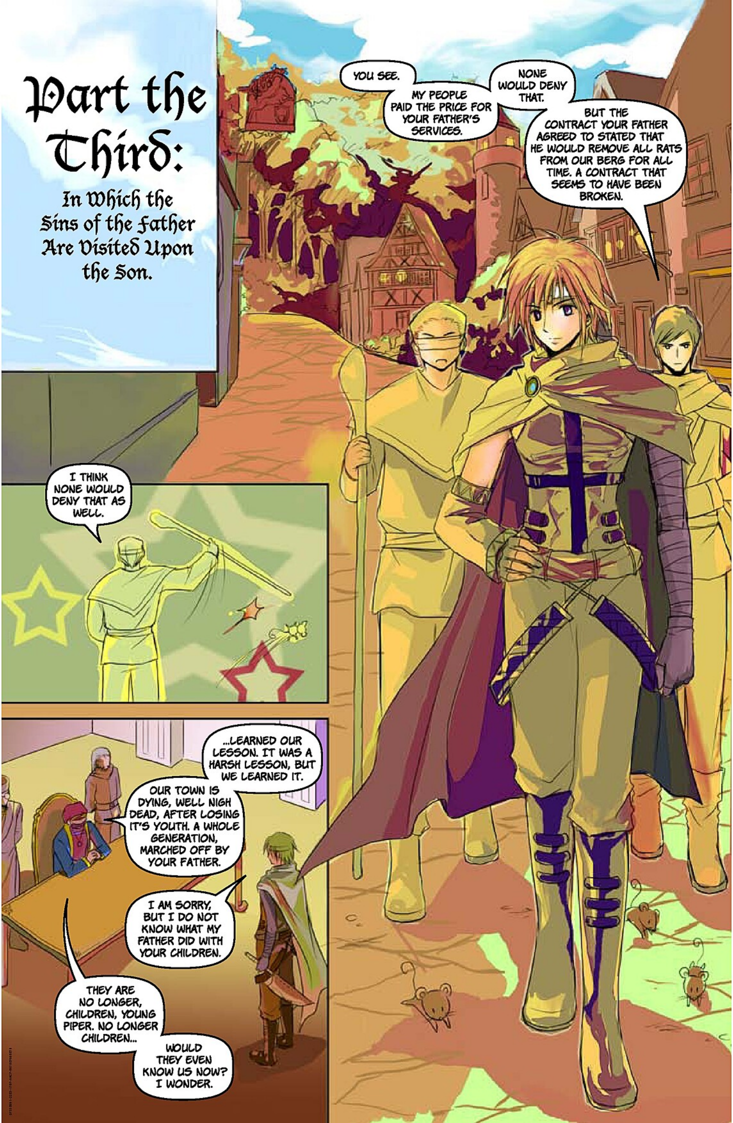

THE MAYOR WAS DUMB, AND THE COUNCIL STOOD AS IF THEY WERE CHANGED INTO BLOCKS OF WOOD, UNABLE TO MOVE A STEP, OR CRY TO THE CHILDREN MERRILY SKIPPING BY, -- COULD ONLY FOLLOW WITH THE EYE THAT JOYOUS CROWD AT THE PIPER'S BACK. BUT HOW THE MAYOR WAS ON THE RACK, AND THE WRETCHED COUNCIL'S BOSOMS BEAT, AS THE PIPER TURNED FROM THE HIGH STREET TO WHERE THE WESER ROLLED ITS WATERS RIGHT IN THE WAY OF THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS!
HOWEVER HE TURNED FROM SOUTH TO WEST, AND TO KOPPELBERG HILL HIS STEPS ADDRESSED, AND AFTER HIM THE CHILDREN PRESSED; GREAT WAS THE JOY IN EVERY BREAST. "HE NEVER CAN CROSS THAT MIGHTY TOP! "HE'S FORCED TO LET THE PIPING DROP, "AND WE SHALL SEE OUR CHILDREN STOP!" WHEN, LO, AS THEY REACHED THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE, A WONDROUS PORTAL OPENED WIDE, AS IF A CAVERN WAS SUDDENLY HOLLOWED; AND THE PIPER ADVANCED AND THE CHILDREN FOLLOWED, AND WHEN ALL WERE IN TO THE VERY LAST, THE DOOR IN THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE SHUT FAST.

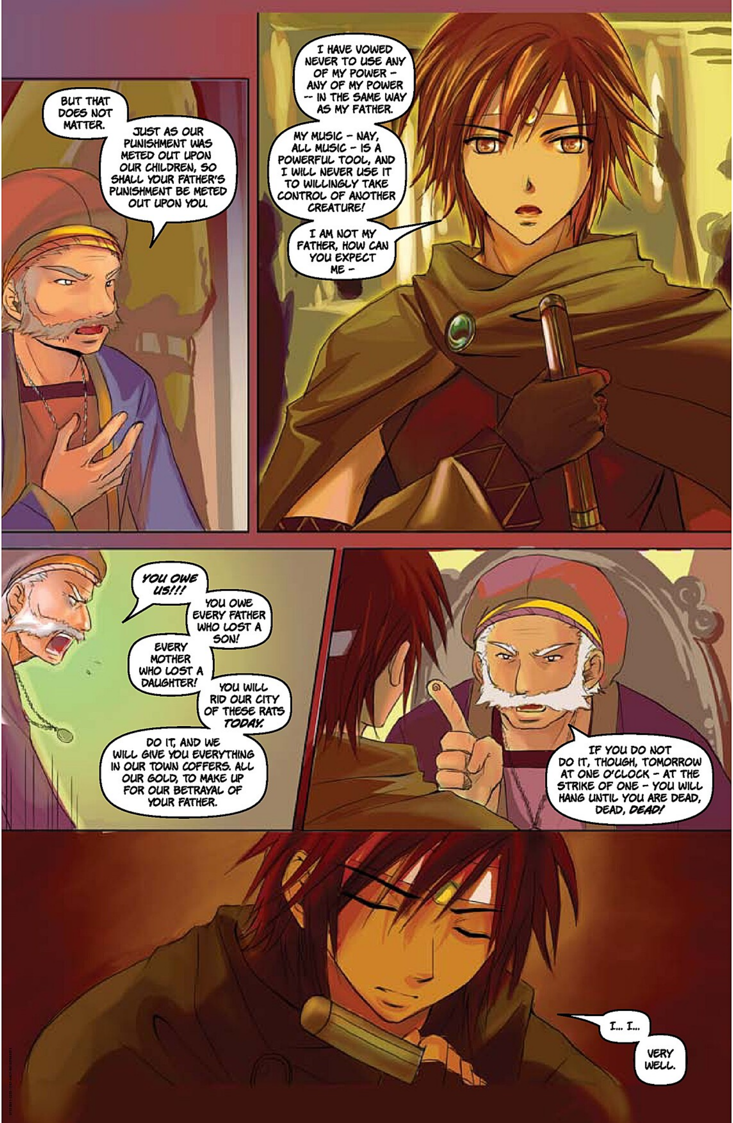

Did I say, all?No! One was lame, And could not dance the whole of the way; And in after years, if you would blame His sadness, he was used to say, -- "It's dull in our town since my playmates left! "I can't forget that I'm bereft "Of all the pleasant sights they see, "Which the Piper also promised me. "For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, "Joining the town and just at hand, "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew, "And flowers put forth a fairer hue, "And everything was strange and new;
"The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, "And their dogs outran our fallow deer, "And honey-bees had lost their stings, "And horses were born with eagles' wings; "And just as I became assured "My lame foot would be speedily cured, "The music stopped and I stood still, "And found myself outside the hill, "Left alone against my will, "To go now limping as before, "And never hear of that country more!"
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South, To offer the Piper, by word of mouth, Wherever it was men's lot to find him, Silver and gold to his heart's content, If he'd only return the way he went, And bring the children behind him. But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour, And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,

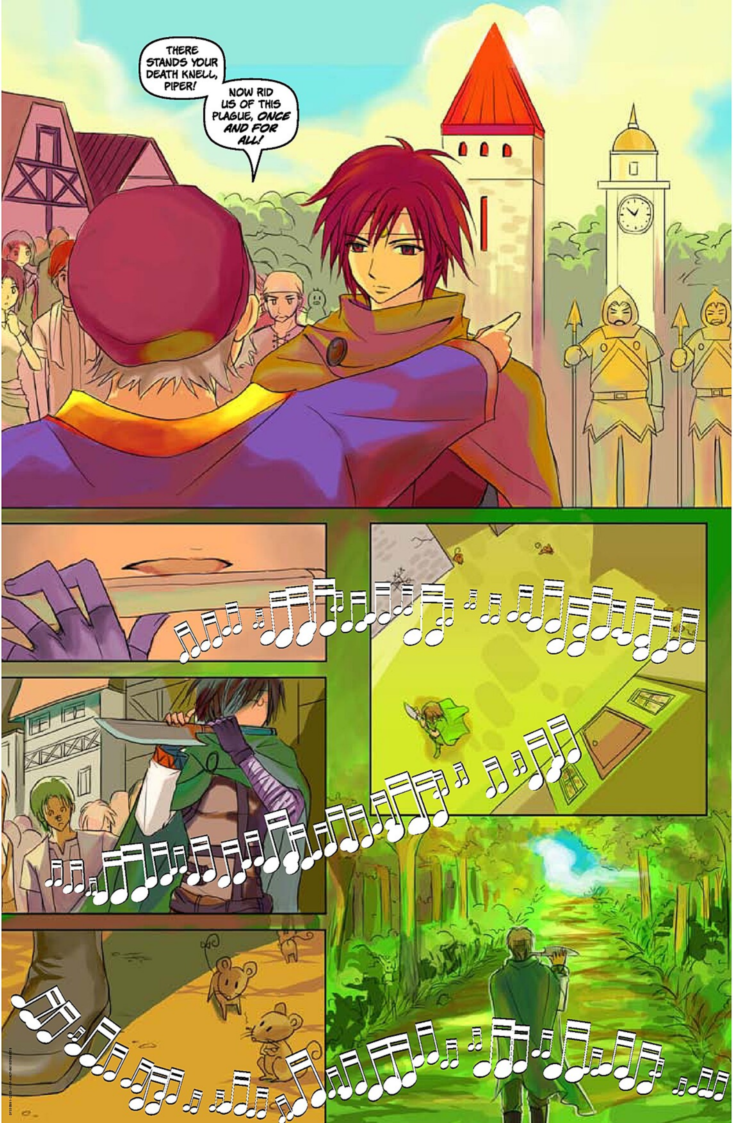

SO, WILLY, LET ME AND YOU BE WIPERS OF SCORES OUT WITH ALL MEN -- ESPECIALLY PIPERS!
AND, WHETHER THEY PIPE US FREE FROM RATS OR FROM MICE, IF WE'VE PROMISED THEM AUGHT, LET US KEEP OUR PROMISE!
CLAPCLAPCLAP CLAPCLAPCLAP
PLEASE, ANY TIPS YOU MIGHT HAVE FOR US LAME, CRIPPLED MUSICIANS, DROP IT IN THE HAT OF YOUR OWN PIPER.
WE COME FOR THE SAKE OF THE SONG, NOT TO TAKE ANY BUSINESS FROM HIM.
COME NOW, BOY, YOU NEED NOT WORRY! THEIR SONG WAS GOOD, BUT YOURS ARE MAGICAL!
YOU'LL NOT BE REPLACED!
NO, MY TIME HERE IS AT AN END...
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!
SO, IT WAS YOU. WE FIGURED AS MUCH.
THEY SAID WE WOULD RECOGNIZE YOU BY THE PIPE.
I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT PIPE.
IT WAS MY FATHER WHO COMMITTED THAT ACT, NOT ME!
YES, AND HE DID IT TO *OUR* FATHERS! *OUR* MOTHERS! *OUR* BROTHERS! *OUR* SISTERS!
WE ARE THE ONLY CHILDREN OF HAMELIN, AND ONLY BECAUSE WE WERE CRIPPLED AND COULD NOT KEEP UP.
WE WERE ALSO UNDER THE MUSIC'S SPELL... IT STILL HAUNTS ME...
I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, BUT I KNOW NOT WHERE YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS MIGHT BE.
MY FATHER TOOK THAT SECRET TO THE GRAVE.
THAT IS NOT WHY WE ARE HERE.
THE RATS HAVE RETURNED.

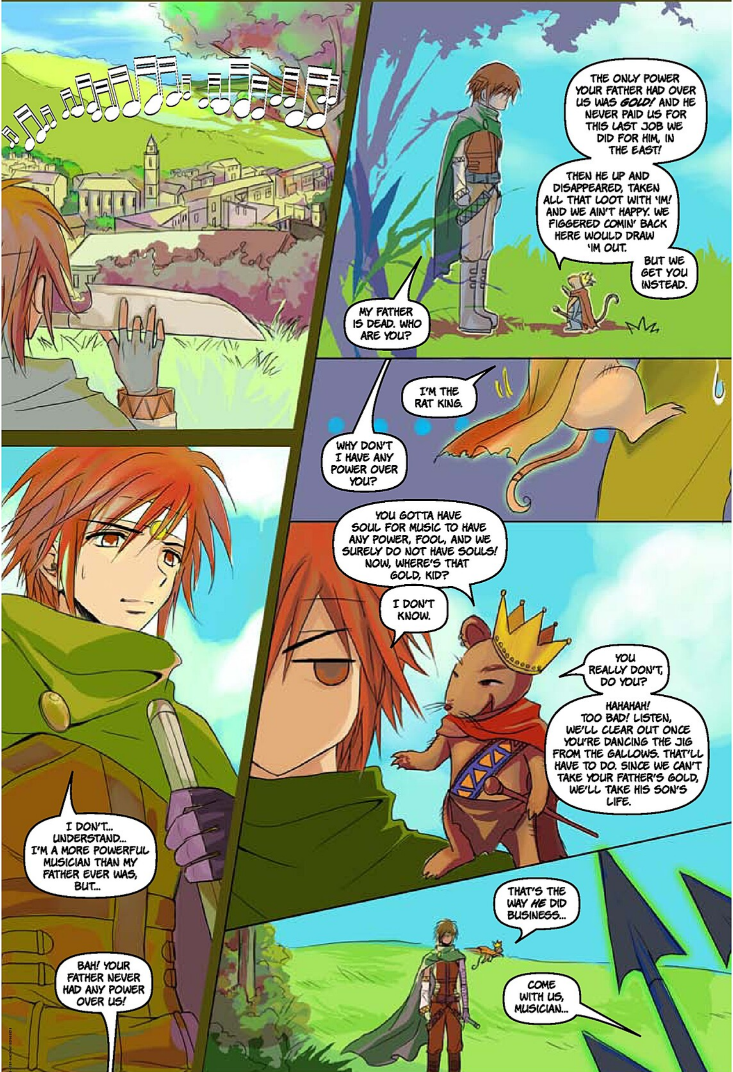
Part the Third:

In Which the Sins of the Father Are Visited Upon the Son.


YOU SEE.
MY PEOPLE PAID THE PRICE FOR YOUR FATHER'S SERVICES.
NONE WOULD DENY THAT.
BUT THE CONTRACT YOUR FATHER AGREED TO STATED THAT HE WOULD REMOVE ALL RATS FROM OUR BERG FOR ALL TIME. A CONTRACT THAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BROKEN.
I THINK NONE WOULD DENY THAT AS WELL.
...LEARNED OUR LESSON. IT WAS A HARSH LESSON, BUT WE LEARNED IT.
OUR TOWN IS DYING, WELL NIGH DEAD, AFTER LOSING IT'S YOUTH. A WHOLE GENERATION, MARCHED OFF BY YOUR FATHER.
I AM SORRY, BUT I DO NOT KNOW WHAT MY FATHER DID WITH YOUR CHILDREN.
THEY ARE NO LONGER, CHILDREN, YOUNG PIPER. NO LONGER CHILDREN...
WOULD THEY EVEN KNOW US NOW? I WONDER.

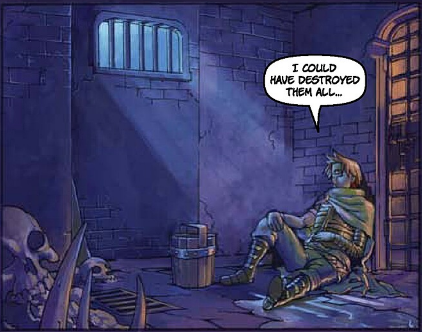

BUT THAT DOES NOT MATTER.
JUST AS OUR PUNISHMENT WAS METED OUT UPON OUR CHILDREN, SO SHALL YOUR FATHER'S PUNISHMENT BE METED OUT UPON YOU.
I HAVE VOWED NEVER TO USE ANY OF MY POWER – ANY OF MY POWER -- IN THE SAME WAY AS MY FATHER.
MY MUSIC – NAY, ALL MUSIC – IS A POWERFUL TOOL, AND I WILL NEVER USE IT TO WILLINGLY TAKE CONTROL OF ANOTHER CREATURE!
I AM NOT MY FATHER, HOW CAN YOU EXPECT ME –
YOU OWE US!!!
YOU OWE EVERY FATHER WHO LOST A SON!
EVERY MOTHER WHO LOST A DAUGHTER!
YOU WILL RID OUR CITY OF THESE RATS *TODAY.*
DO IT, AND WE WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING IN OUR TOWN COFFERS. ALL OUR GOLD, TO MAKE UP FOR OUR BETRAYAL OF YOUR FATHER.
IF YOU DO NOT DO IT, THOUGH, TOMORROW AT ONE O'CLOCK – AT THE STRIKE OF ONE – YOU WILL HANG UNTIL YOU ARE DEAD, DEAD, *DEAD!*
I... I...
VERY WELL.

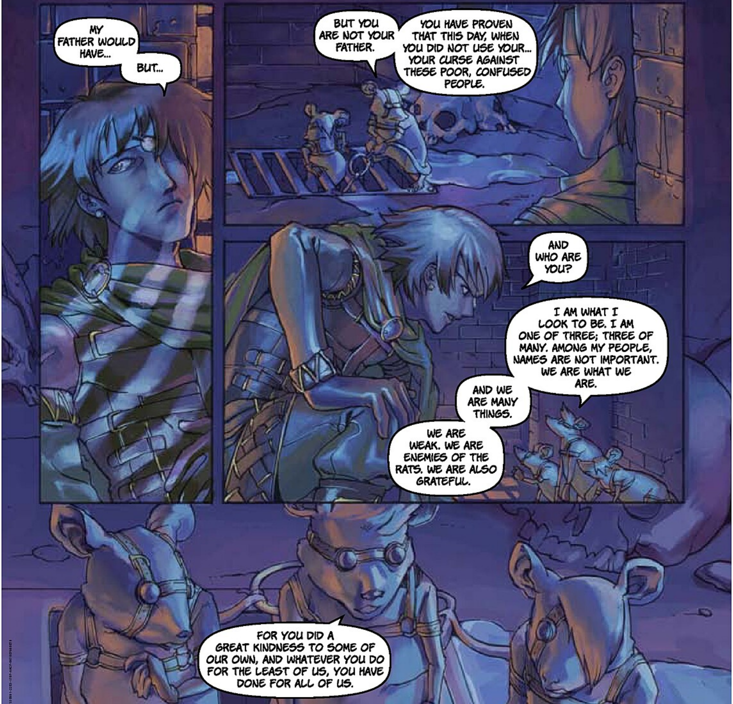

THERE STANDS YOUR DEATH KNELL, PIPER!
NOW RID US OF THIS PLAGUE, *ONCE AND FOR ALL!*

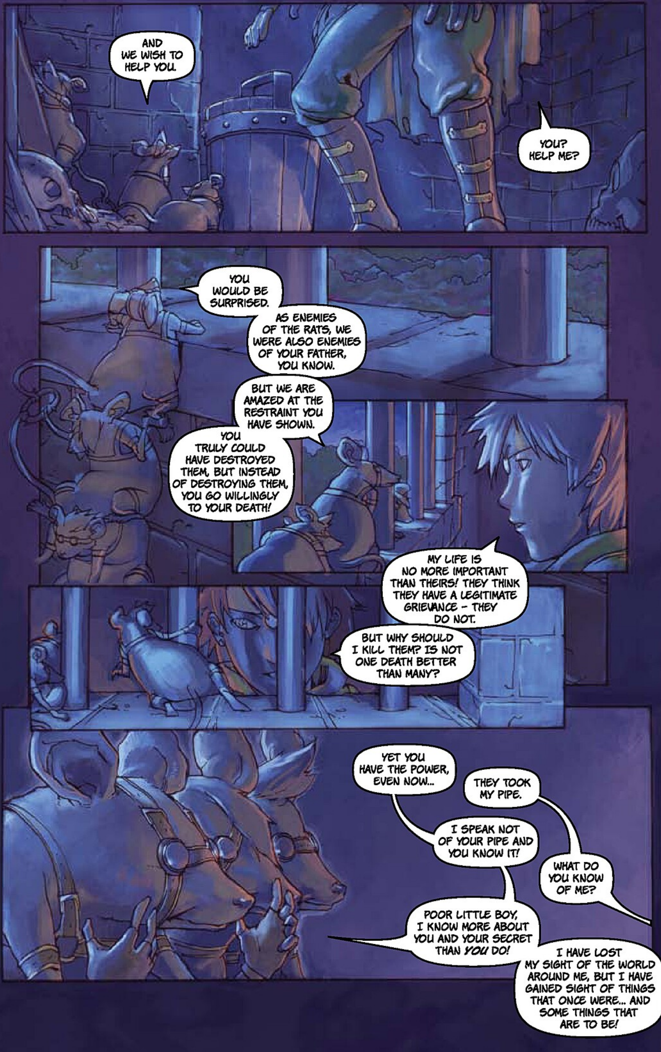

I DON'T... UNDERSTAND... I'M A MORE POWERFUL MUSICIAN THAN MY FATHER EVER WAS, BUT...
BAH! YOUR FATHER NEVER HAD ANY POWER OVER US!
THE ONLY POWER YOUR FATHER HAD OVER US WAS *GOLD!* AND HE NEVER PAID US FOR THIS LAST JOB WE DID FOR HIM, IN THE EAST!
THEN HE UP AND DISAPPEARED, TAKEN ALL THAT LOOT WITH 'IM! AND WE AIN'T HAPPY. WE FIGGERED COMIN' BACK HERE WOULD DRAW 'IM OUT.
BUT WE GET YOU INSTEAD.
MY FATHER IS DEAD. WHO ARE YOU?
I'M THE RAT KING.
WHY DON'T I HAVE ANY POWER OVER YOU?
YOU GOTTA HAVE SOUL FOR MUSIC TO HAVE ANY POWER, FOOL, AND WE SURELY DO NOT HAVE SOULS! NOW, WHERE'S THAT GOLD, KID?
I DON'T KNOW.
YOU REALLY DON'T, DO YOU?
HAHAHAH! TOO BAD! LISTEN, WE'LL CLEAR OUT ONCE YOU'RE DANCING THE JIG FROM THE GALLOWS. THAT'LL HAVE TO DO. SINCE WE CAN'T TAKE YOUR FATHER'S GOLD, WE'LL TAKE HIS SON'S LIFE.
THAT'S THE WAY *HE* DID BUSINESS...
COME WITH US, MUSICIAN...

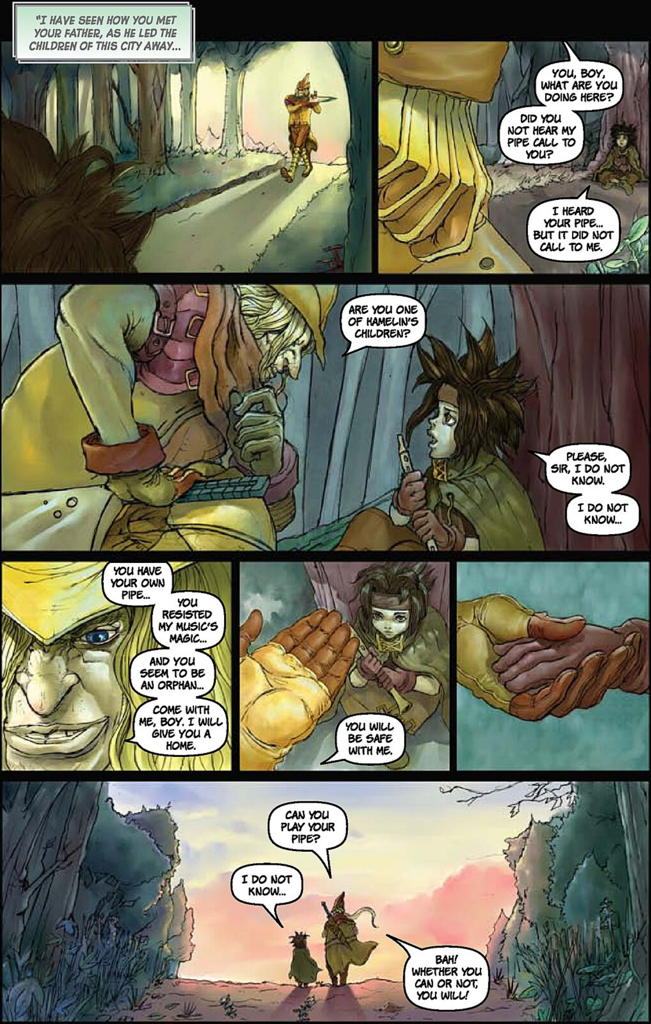
Part the Fourth:

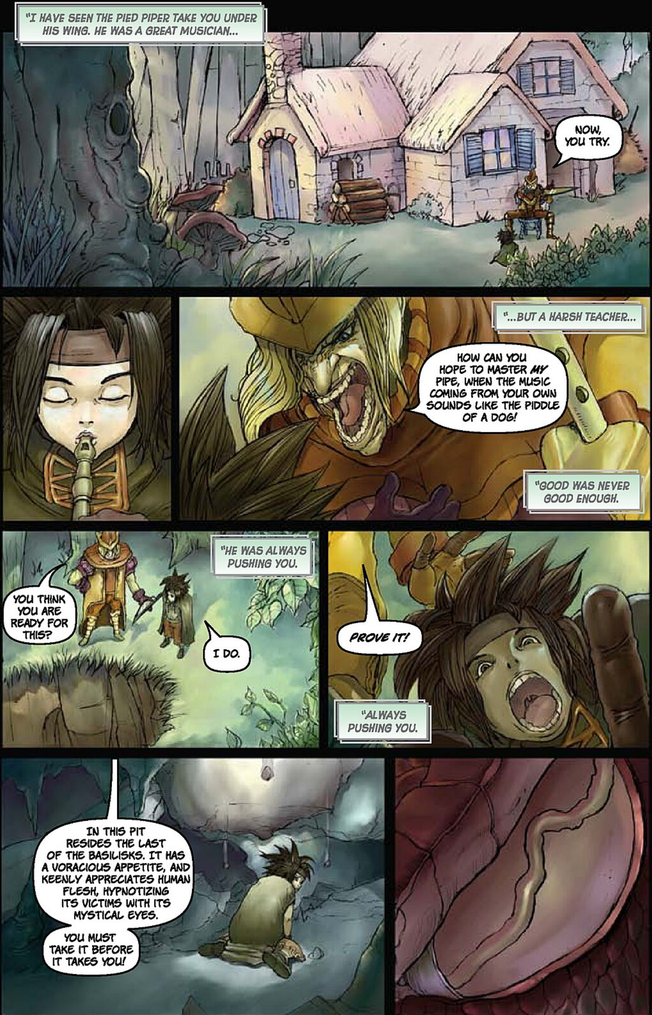
In Which a History Is Revealed and a Mystery Unveiled.

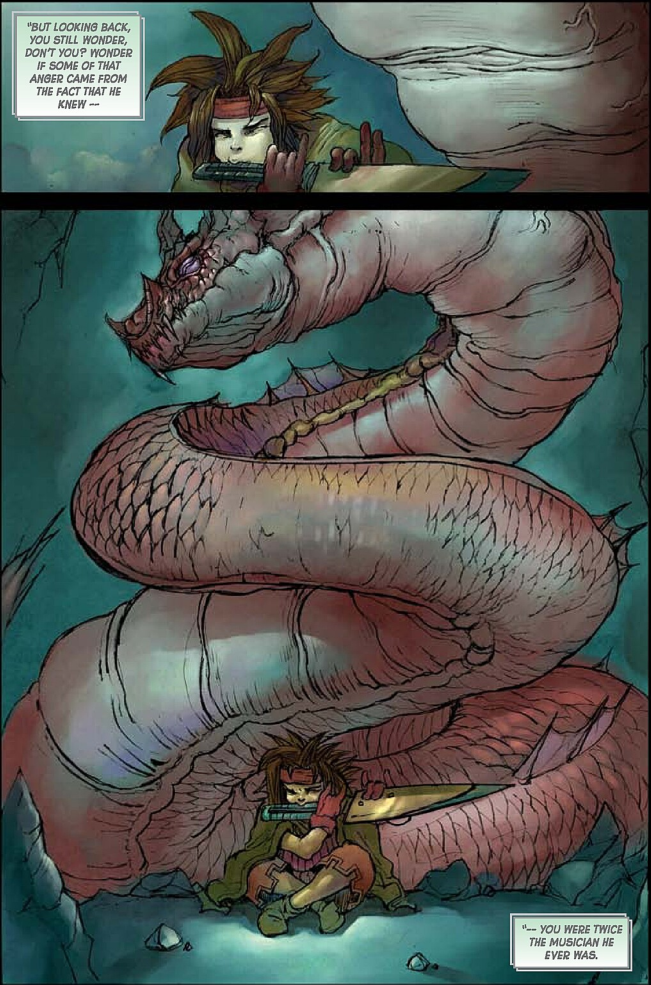

I COULD HAVE DESTROYED THEM ALL...

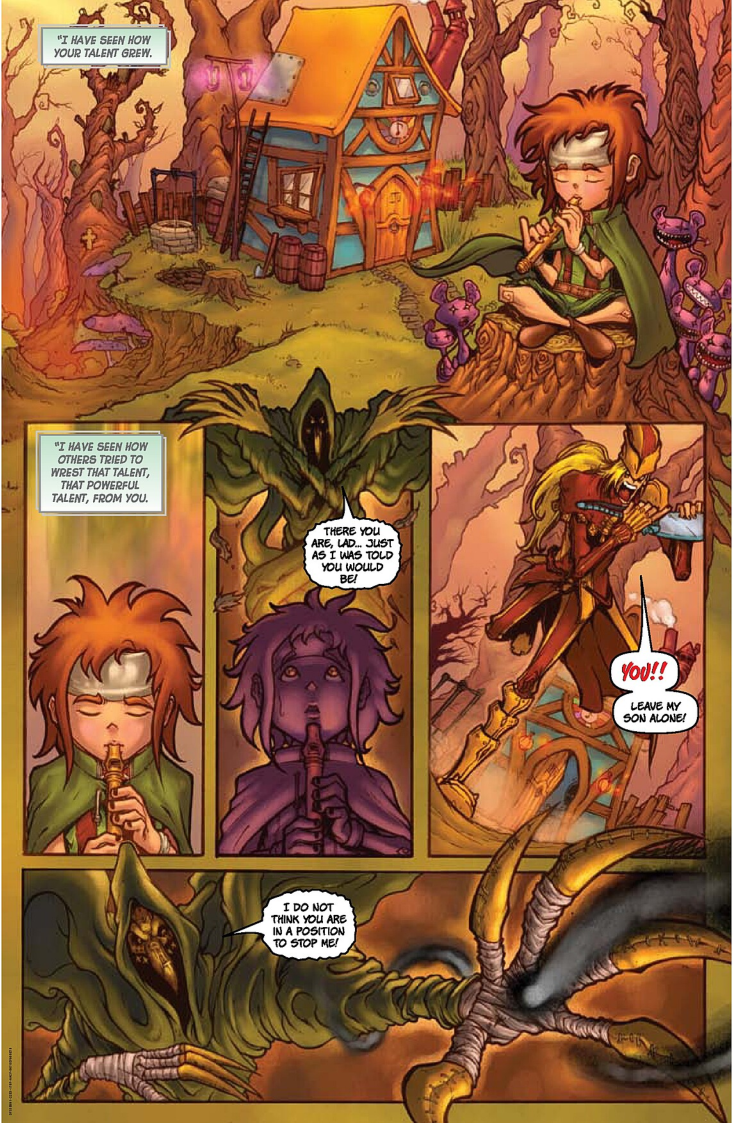

MY FATHER WOULD HAVE...
BUT...
BUT YOU ARE NOT YOUR FATHER.
YOU HAVE PROVEN THAT THIS DAY, WHEN YOU DID NOT USE YOUR... YOUR CURSE AGAINST THESE POOR, CONFUSED PEOPLE.
AND WHO ARE YOU?
I AM WHAT I LOOK TO BE. I AM ONE OF THREE; THREE OF MANY. AMONG MY PEOPLE, NAMES ARE NOT IMPORTANT. WE ARE WHAT WE ARE.
AND WE ARE MANY THINGS.
WE ARE WEAK. WE ARE ENEMIES OF THE RATS. WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL.
FOR YOU DID A GREAT KINDNESS TO SOME OF OUR OWN, AND WHATEVER YOU DO FOR THE LEAST OF US, YOU HAVE DONE FOR ALL OF US.

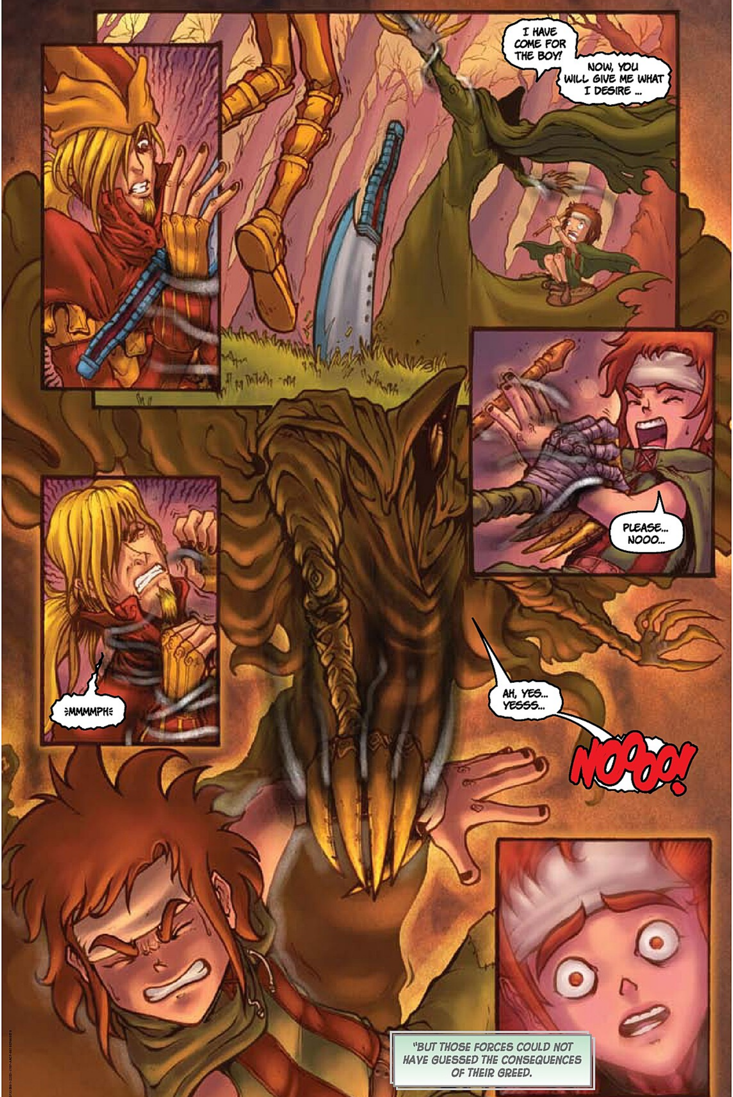

AND WE WISH TO HELP YOU.
YOU? HELP ME?
YOU WOULD BE SURPRISED.
AS ENEMIES OF THE RATS, WE WERE ALSO ENEMIES OF YOUR FATHER, YOU KNOW.
BUT WE ARE AMAZED AT THE RESTRAINT YOU HAVE SHOWN.
YOU TRULY COULD HAVE DESTROYED THEM, BUT INSTEAD OF DESTROYING THEM, YOU GO WILLINGLY TO YOUR DEATH!
MY LIFE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIRS! THEY THINK THEY HAVE A LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCE - THEY DO NOT.
BUT WHY SHOULD I KILL THEM? IS NOT ONE DEATH BETTER THAN MANY?
YET YOU HAVE THE POWER, EVEN NOW...
THEY TOOK MY PIPE.
I SPEAK NOT OF YOUR PIPE AND YOU KNOW IT!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF ME?
POOR LITTLE BOY, I KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR SECRET THAN *YOU* DO!
I HAVE LOST MY SIGHT OF THE WORLD AROUND ME, BUT I HAVE GAINED SIGHT OF THINGS THAT ONCE WERE... AND SOME THINGS THAT ARE TO BE!

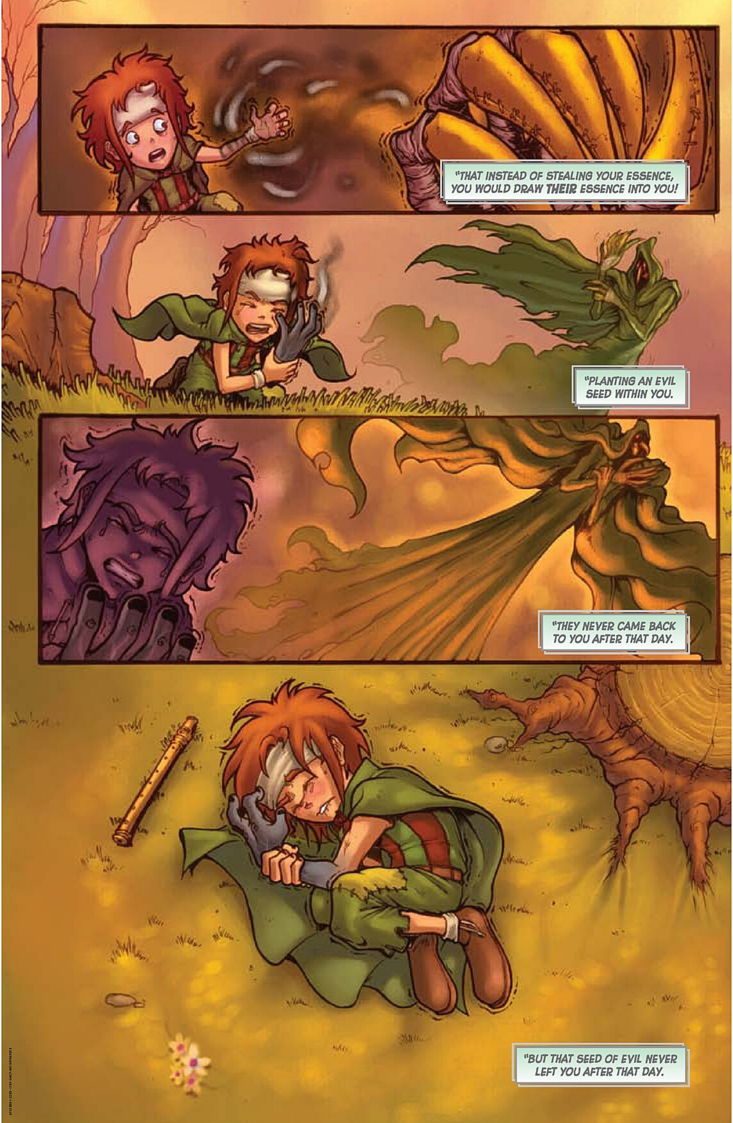

"I HAVE SEEN HOW YOU MET YOUR FATHER, AS HE LED THE CHILDREN OF THIS CITY AWAY...
YOU, BOY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DID YOU NOT HEAR MY PIPE CALL TO YOU?
I HEARD YOUR PIPE... BUT IT DID NOT CALL TO ME.
ARE YOU ONE OF HAMELIN'S CHILDREN?
PLEASE, SIR, I DO NOT KNOW.
I DO NOT KNOW...
YOU HAVE YOUR OWN PIPE...
YOU RESISTED MY MUSIC'S MAGIC...
AND YOU SEEM TO BE AN ORPHAN...
COME WITH ME, BOY. I WILL GIVE YOU A HOME.
YOU WILL BE SAFE WITH ME.
CAN YOU PLAY YOUR PIPE?
I DO NOT KNOW...
BAH! WHETHER YOU CAN OR NOT, YOU WILL!

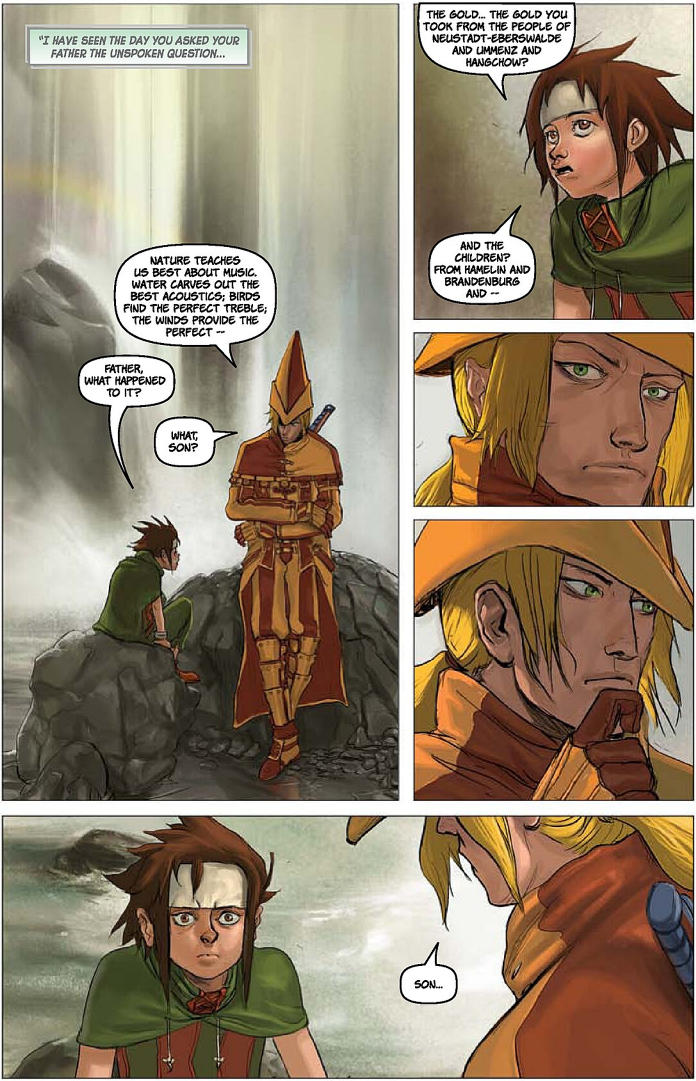

"I HAVE SEEN THE PIED PIPER TAKE YOU UNDER HIS WING. HE WAS A GREAT MUSICIAN...
NOW, YOU TRY.
"...BUT A HARSH TEACHER...
HOW CAN YOU HOPE TO MASTER *MY* PIPE, WHEN THE MUSIC COMING FROM YOUR OWN SOUNDS LIKE THE PIDDLE OF A DOG!
"GOOD WAS NEVER GOOD ENOUGH.
"HE WAS ALWAYS PUSHING YOU.
YOU THINK YOU ARE READY FOR THIS?
I DO.
PROVE IT!
"ALWAYS PUSHING YOU.
IN THIS PIT RESIDES THE LAST OF THE BASILISKS. IT HAS A VORACIOUS APPETITE, AND KEENLY APPRECIATES HUMAN FLESH, HYPNOTIZING ITS VICTIMS WITH ITS MYSTICAL EYES.
YOU MUST TAKE IT BEFORE IT TAKES YOU!

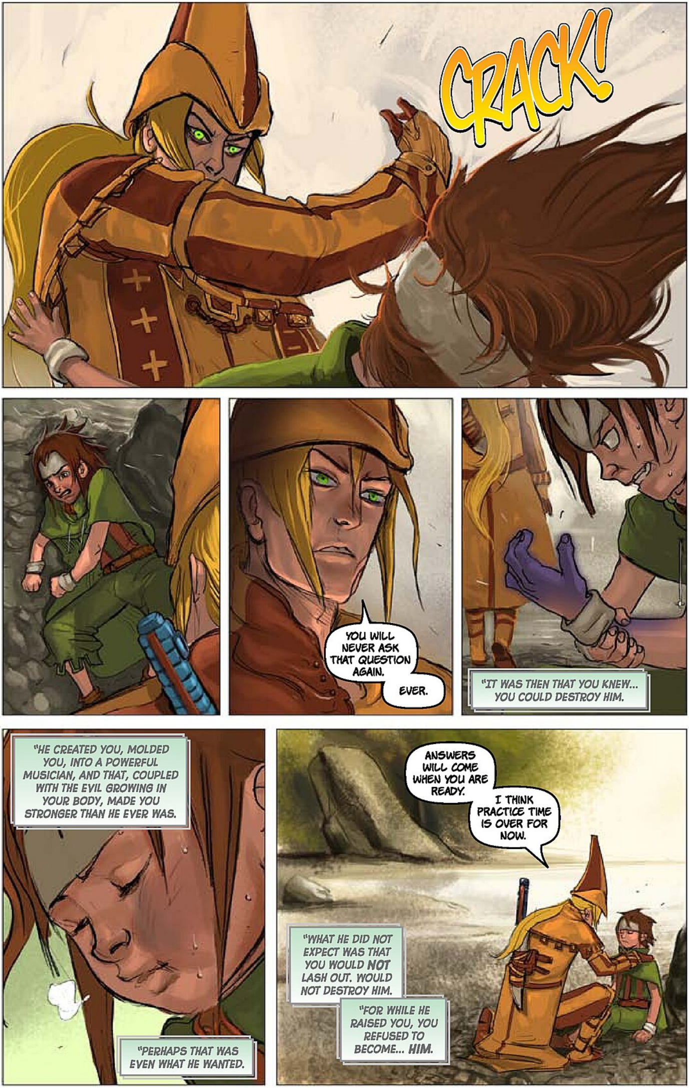

"BUT LOOKING BACK, YOU STILL WONDER, DON'T YOU? WONDER IF SOME OF THAT ANGER CAME FROM THE FACT THAT HE KNEW --
"-- YOU WERE TWICE THE MUSICIAN HE EVER WAS.

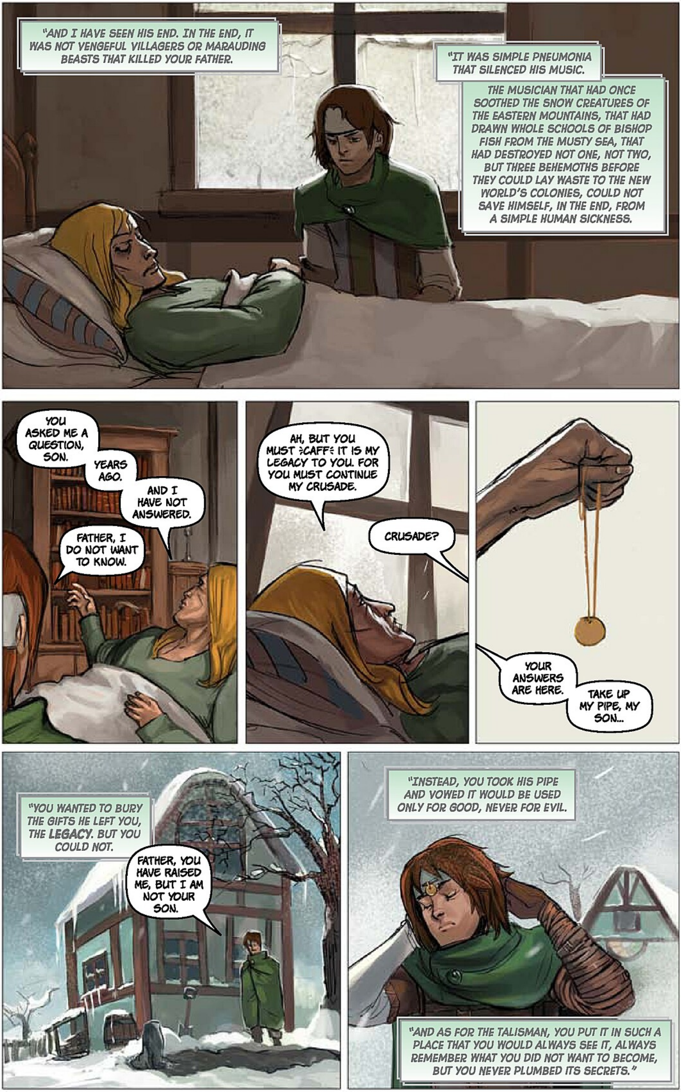

"I HAVE SEEN HOW YOUR TALENT GREW.
"I HAVE SEEN HOW OTHERS TRIED TO WREST THAT TALENT, THAT POWERFUL TALENT, FROM YOU.
THERE YOU ARE, LAD... JUST AS I WAS TOLD YOU WOULD BE!
YOU!!
LEAVE MY SON ALONE!
I DO NOT THINK YOU ARE IN A POSITION TO STOP ME!

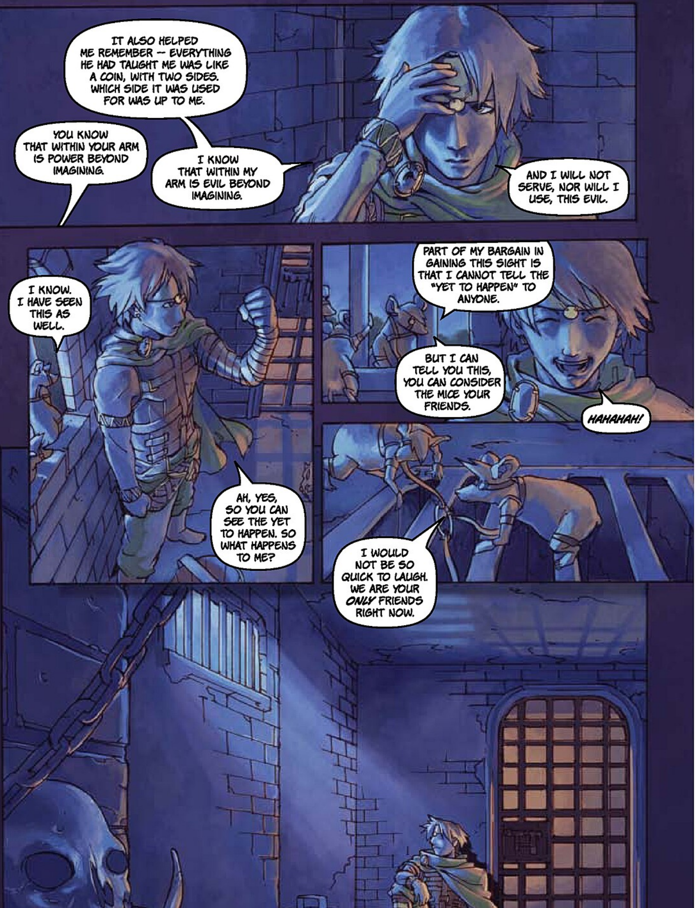

I HAVE COME FOR THE BOY!
NOW, YOU WILL GIVE ME WHAT I DESIRE ...
PLEASE... NOOO...
≑MMMMPH≑
AH, YES... YESSS...
NOOOO!
"BUT THOSE FORCES COULD NOT HAVE GUESSED THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR GREED.


"THAT INSTEAD OF STEALING YOUR ESSENCE, YOU WOULD DRAW THEIR ESSENCE INTO YOU!
"PLANTING AN EVIL SEED WITHIN YOU.
"THEY NEVER CAME BACK TO YOU AFTER THAT DAY.
"BUT THAT SEED OF EVIL NEVER LEFT YOU AFTER THAT DAY.


"I HAVE SEEN THE DAY YOU ASKED YOUR FATHER THE UNSPOKEN QUESTION...
NATURE TEACHES US BEST ABOUT MUSIC. WATER CARVES OUT THE BEST ACOUSTICS; BIRDS FIND THE PERFECT TREBLE; THE WINDS PROVIDE THE PERFECT --
FATHER, WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?
WHAT, SON?
THE GOLD... THE GOLD YOU TOOK FROM THE PEOPLE OF NEUSTADT-EBERSWALDE AND UMMENZ AND HANGCHOW?
AND THE CHILDREN? FROM HAMELIN AND BRANDENBURG AND --
SON...

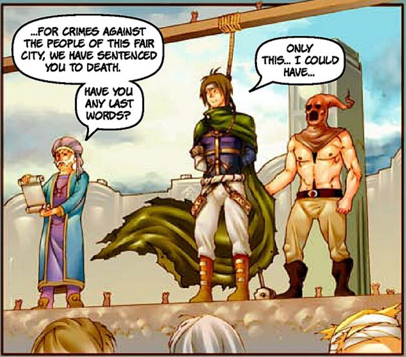

CRACK!
YOU WILL NEVER ASK THAT QUESTION AGAIN.
EVER.
"IT WAS THEN THAT YOU KNEW... YOU COULD DESTROY HIM.
"HE CREATED YOU, MOLDED YOU, INTO A POWERFUL MUSICIAN, AND THAT, COUPLED WITH THE EVIL GROWING IN YOUR BODY, MADE YOU STRONGER THAN HE EVER WAS.
"PERHAPS THAT WAS EVEN WHAT HE WANTED.
ANSWERS WILL COME WHEN YOU ARE READY.
I THINK PRACTICE TIME IS OVER FOR NOW.
"WHAT HE DID NOT EXPECT WAS THAT YOU WOULD NOT LASH OUT. WOULD NOT DESTROY HIM.
"FOR WHILE HE RAISED YOU, YOU REFUSED TO BECOME... HIM.

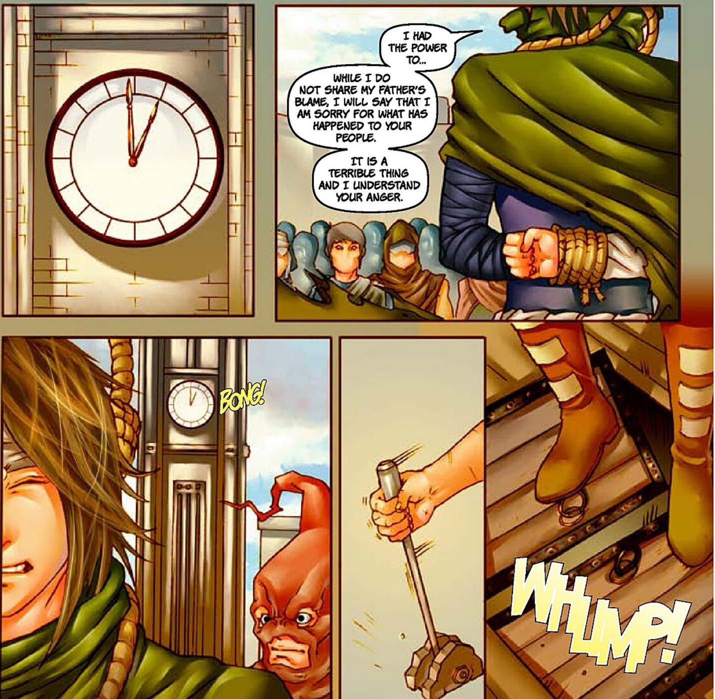

"AND I HAVE SEEN HIS END. IN THE END, IT WAS NOT VENGEFUL VILLAGERS OR MARAUDING BEASTS THAT KILLED YOUR FATHER.
"IT WAS SIMPLE PNEUMONIA THAT SILENCED HIS MUSIC.
THE MUSICIAN THAT HAD ONCE SOOTHED THE SNOW CREATURES OF THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS, THAT HAD DRAWN WHOLE SCHOOLS OF BISHOP FISH FROM THE MUSTY SEA, THAT HAD DESTROYED NOT ONE, NOT TWO, BUT THREE BEHEMOTHS BEFORE THEY COULD LAY WASTE TO THE NEW WORLD'S COLONIES, COULD NOT SAVE HIMSELF, IN THE END, FROM A SIMPLE HUMAN SICKNESS.
YOU ASKED ME A QUESTION, SON.
YEARS AGO.
AND I HAVE NOT ANSWERED.
FATHER, I DO NOT WANT TO KNOW.
AH, BUT YOU MUST ≻CAFF≺ IT IS MY LEGACY TO YOU. FOR YOU MUST CONTINUE MY CRUSADE.
CRUSADE?
YOUR ANSWERS ARE HERE.
TAKE UP MY PIPE, MY SON...
"YOU WANTED TO BURY THE GIFTS HE LEFT YOU, THE LEGACY. BUT YOU COULD NOT.
FATHER, YOU HAVE RAISED ME, BUT I AM NOT YOUR SON.
"INSTEAD, YOU TOOK HIS PIPE AND VOWED IT WOULD BE USED ONLY FOR GOOD, NEVER FOR EVIL.
"AND AS FOR THE TALISMAN, YOU PUT IT IN SUCH A PLACE THAT YOU WOULD ALWAYS SEE IT, ALWAYS REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID NOT WANT TO BECOME, BUT YOU NEVER PLUMBED ITS SECRETS."

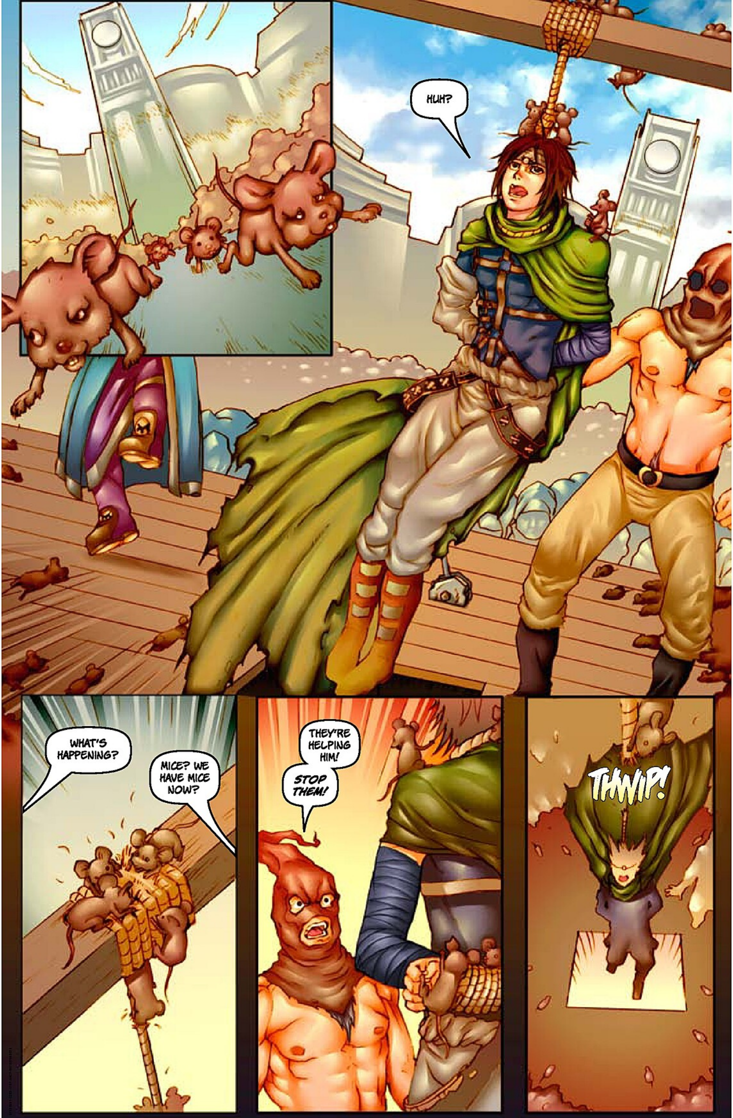

IT ALSO HELPED ME REMEMBER -- EVERYTHING HE HAD TAUGHT ME WAS LIKE A COIN, WITH TWO SIDES. WHICH SIDE IT WAS USED FOR WAS UP TO ME.
YOU KNOW THAT WITHIN YOUR ARM IS POWER BEYOND IMAGINING.
I KNOW THAT WITHIN MY ARM IS EVIL BEYOND IMAGINING.
AND I WILL NOT SERVE, NOR WILL I USE, THIS EVIL.
I KNOW. I HAVE SEEN THIS AS WELL.
AH, YES, SO YOU CAN SEE THE YET TO HAPPEN. SO WHAT HAPPENS TO ME?
PART OF MY BARGAIN IN GAINING THIS SIGHT IS THAT I CANNOT TELL THE "YET TO HAPPEN" TO ANYONE.
BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS, YOU CAN CONSIDER THE MICE YOUR FRIENDS.
HAHAHAH!
I WOULD NOT BE SO QUICK TO LAUGH. WE ARE YOUR ONLY FRIENDS RIGHT NOW.

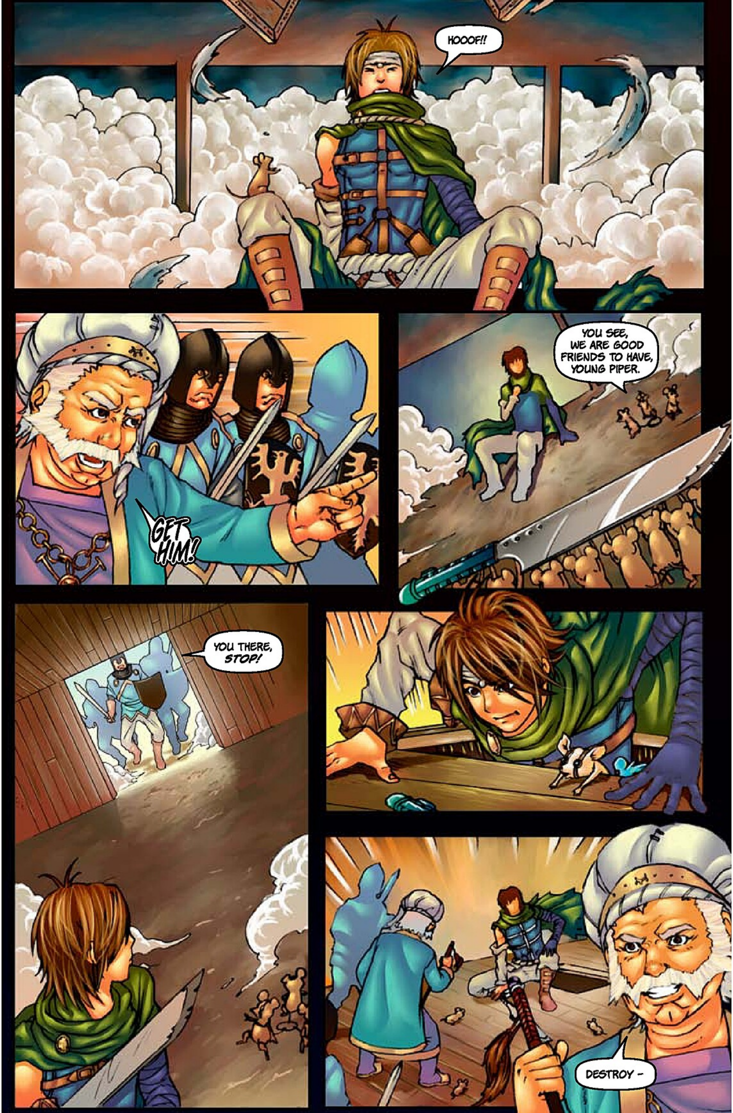
Part the Fifth:

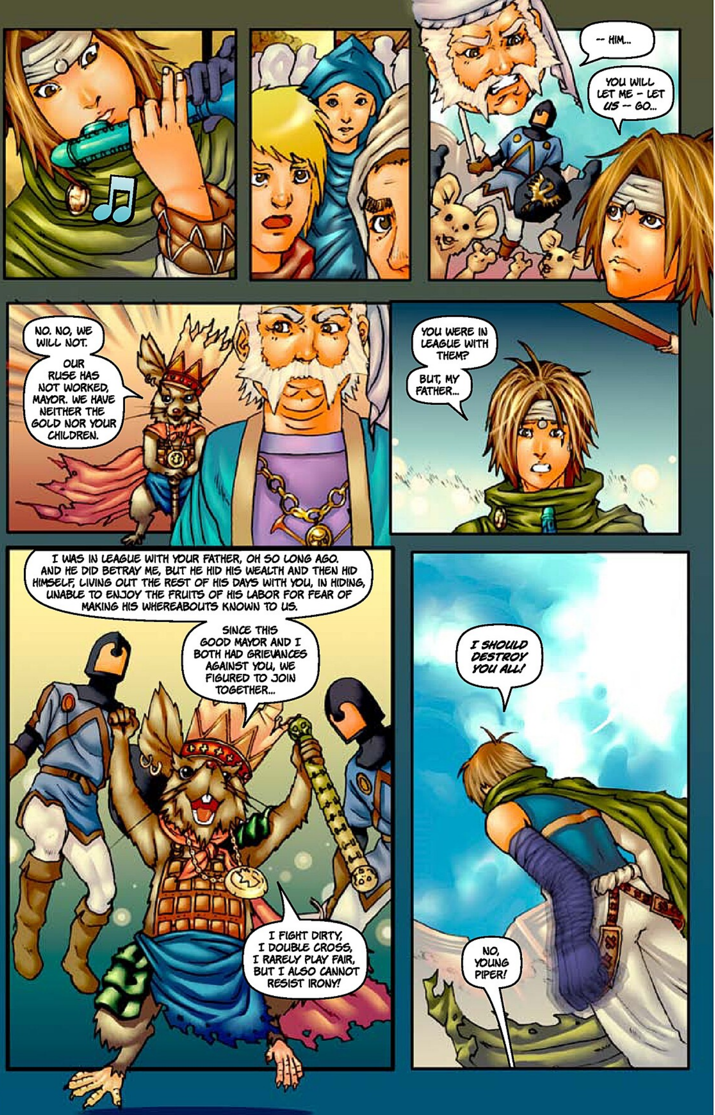
In Which the Clock Strikes One.

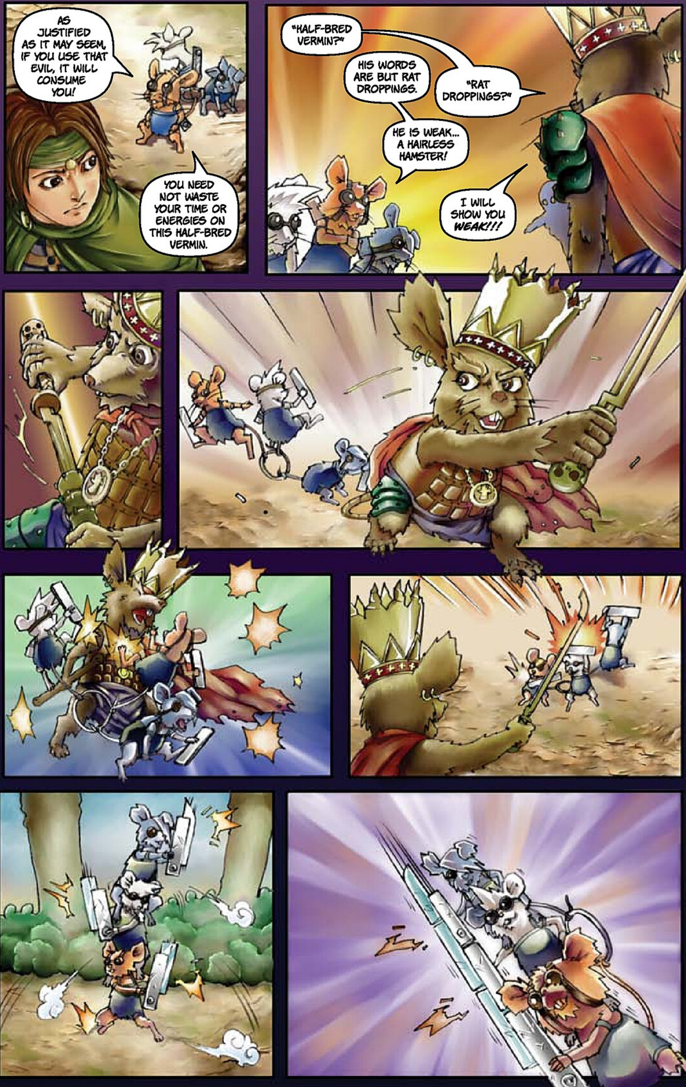

...FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF THIS FAIR CITY, WE HAVE SENTENCED YOU TO DEATH.
HAVE YOU ANY LAST WORDS?
ONLY THIS... I COULD HAVE...

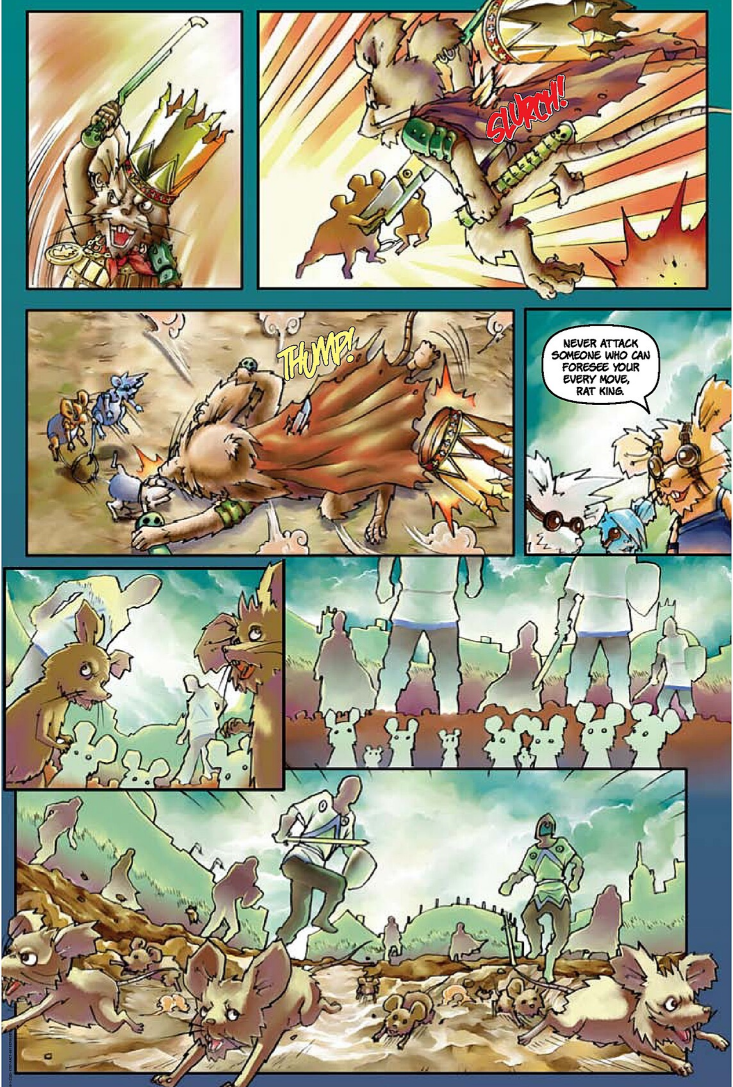

I HAD THE POWER TO...
WHILE I DO NOT SHARE MY FATHER'S BLAME, I WILL SAY THAT I AM SORRY FOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR PEOPLE.
IT IS A TERRIBLE THING AND I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER.
BONG!
WHUMP!

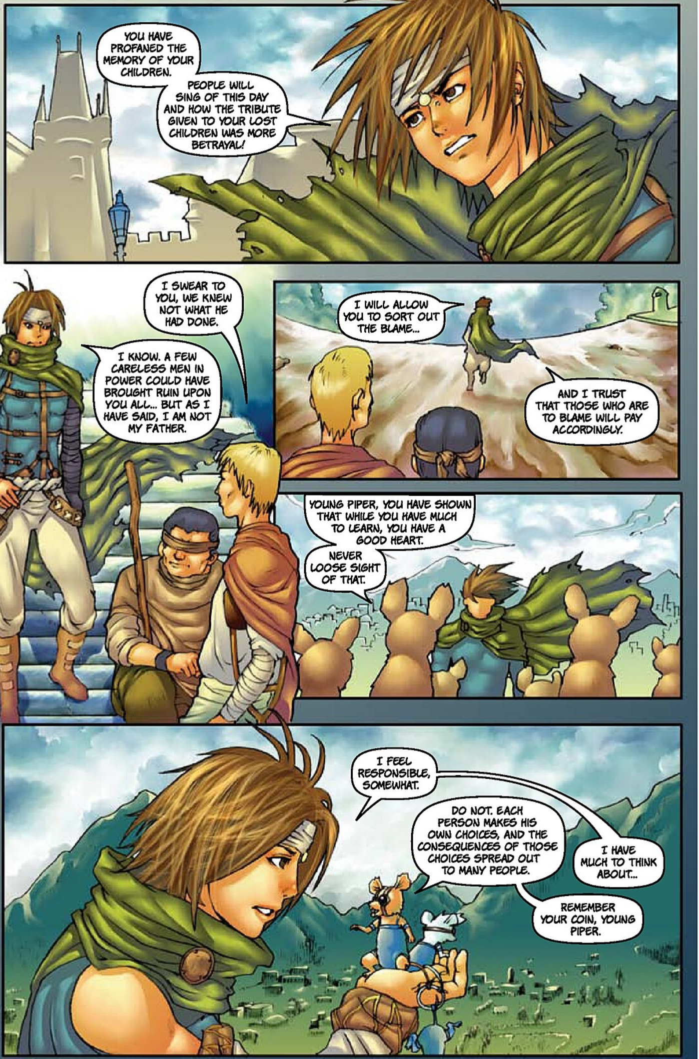

HUH?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
MICE? WE HAVE MICE NOW?
THEY'RE HELPING HIM!
STOP THEM!
THWIP!


HOOOF!!
GET HIM!
YOU SEE, WE ARE GOOD FRIENDS TO HAVE, YOUNG PIPER.
YOU THERE, *STOP!*
DESTROY -


-- HIM...
YOU WILL LET ME - LET *US* -- GO...
NO. NO, WE WILL NOT.
OUR RUSE HAS NOT WORKED, MAYOR. WE HAVE NEITHER THE GOLD NOR YOUR CHILDREN.
YOU WERE IN LEAGUE WITH THEM?
BUT, MY FATHER...
I WAS IN LEAGUE WITH YOUR FATHER, OH SO LONG AGO. AND HE DID BETRAY ME, BUT HE HID HIS WEALTH AND THEN HID HIMSELF, LIVING OUT THE REST OF HIS DAYS WITH YOU, IN HIDING, UNABLE TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF HIS LABOR FOR FEAR OF MAKING HIS WHEREABOUTS KNOWN TO US.
SINCE THIS GOOD MAYOR AND I BOTH HAD GRIEVANCES AGAINST YOU, WE FIGURED TO JOIN TOGETHER...
I FIGHT DIRTY, I DOUBLE CROSS, I RARELY PLAY FAIR, BUT I ALSO CANNOT RESIST IRONY!
I SHOULD DESTROY YOU ALL!
NO, YOUNG PIPER!

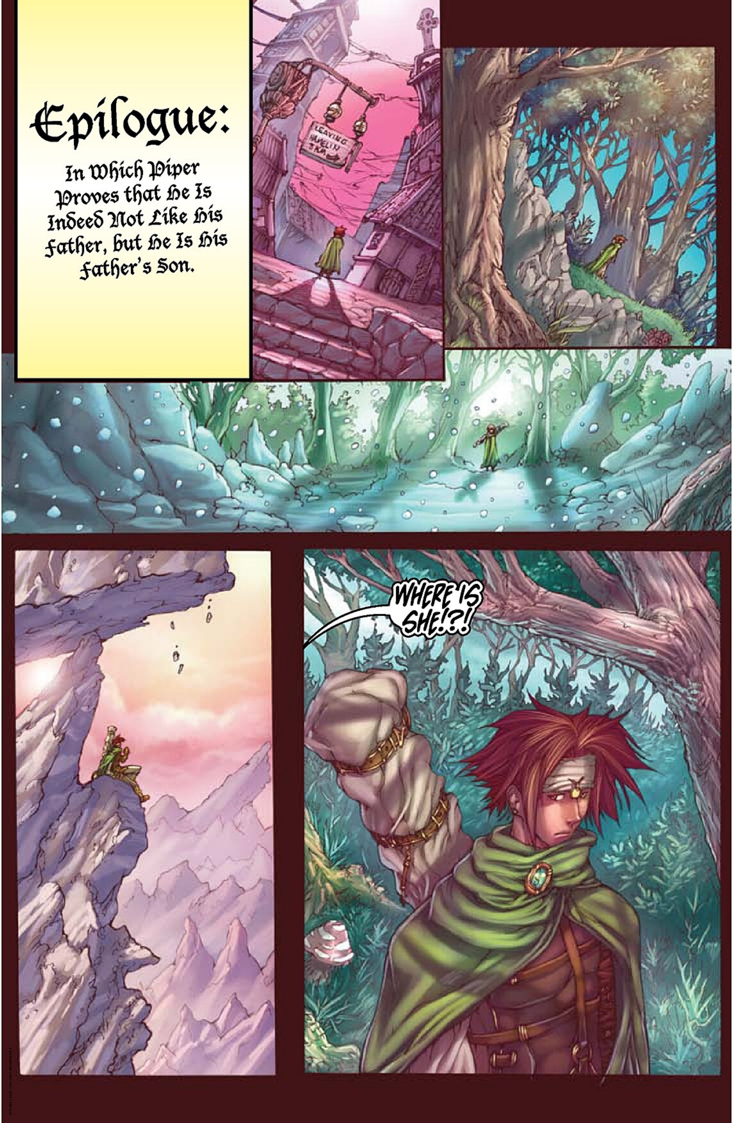

AS JUSTIFIED AS IT MAY SEEM, IF YOU USE THAT EVIL, IT WILL CONSUME YOU!
YOU NEED NOT WASTE YOUR TIME OR ENERGIES ON THIS HALF-BRED VERMIN.
"HALF-BRED VERMIN?"
HIS WORDS ARE BUT RAT DROPPINGS.
"RAT DROPPINGS?"
HE IS WEAK... A HAIRLESS HAMSTER!
I WILL SHOW YOU *WEAK!!!*

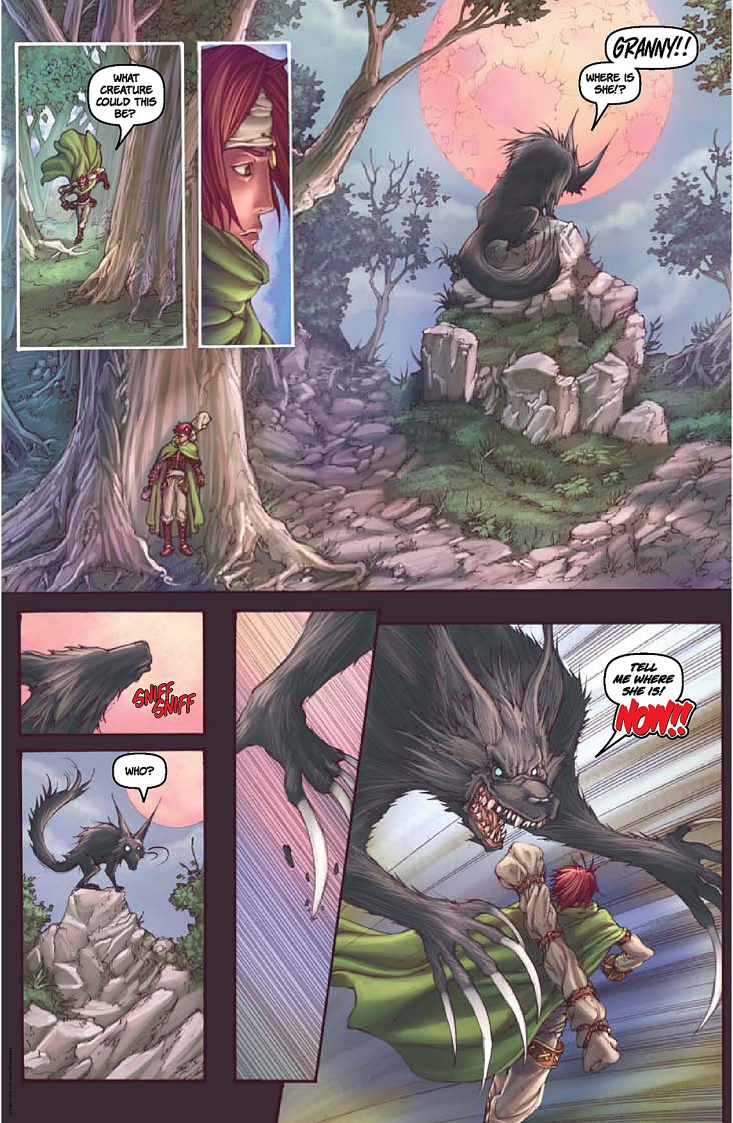

SLURCH!
THUMP!
NEVER ATTACK SOMEONE WHO CAN FORESEE YOUR EVERY MOVE, RAT KING.

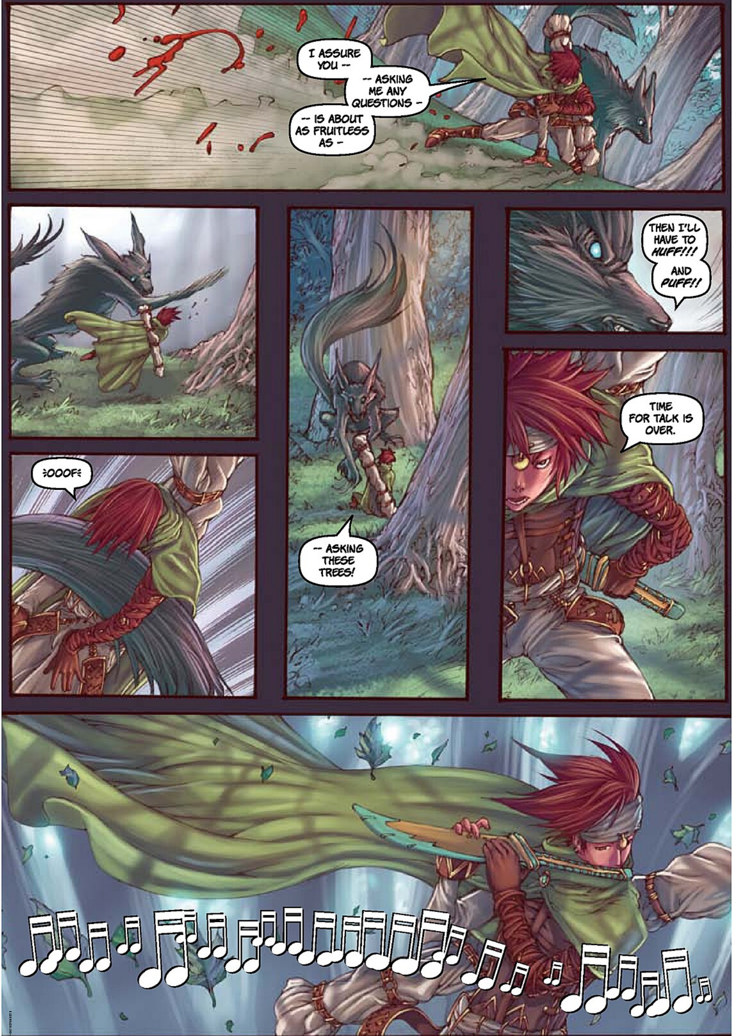

YOU HAVE PROFANED THE MEMORY OF YOUR CHILDREN.
PEOPLE WILL SING OF THIS DAY AND HOW THE TRIBUTE GIVEN TO YOUR LOST CHILDREN WAS MORE BETRAYAL!
I SWEAR TO YOU, WE KNEW NOT WHAT HE HAD DONE.
I KNOW. A FEW CARELESS MEN IN POWER COULD HAVE BROUGHT RUIN UPON YOU ALL... BUT AS I HAVE SAID, I AM NOT MY FATHER.
I WILL ALLOW YOU TO SORT OUT THE BLAME...
AND I TRUST THAT THOSE WHO ARE TO BLAME WILL PAY ACCORDINGLY.
YOUNG PIPER, YOU HAVE SHOWN THAT WHILE YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN, YOU HAVE A GOOD HEART.
NEVER LOOSE SIGHT OF THAT.
I FEEL RESPONSIBLE, SOMEWHAT.
DO NOT. EACH PERSON MAKES HIS OWN CHOICES, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THOSE CHOICES SPREAD OUT TO MANY PEOPLE.
I HAVE MUCH TO THINK ABOUT...
REMEMBER YOUR COIN, YOUNG PIPER.

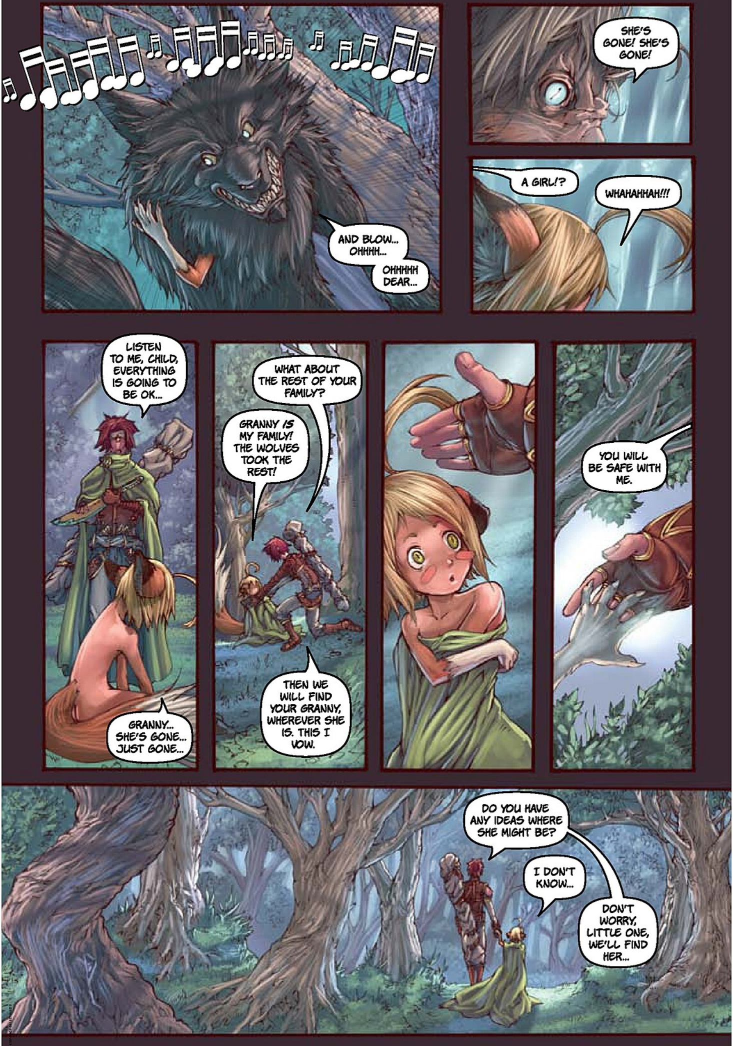
Epilogue:

In Which Piper Proves that He Is Indeed Not Like His Father, but He Is His Father's Son.


LEAVING HAMELIN 3KM
WHERE IS SHE!?!


WHAT CREATURE COULD THIS BE?
GRANNY!!
WHERE IS SHE!?
SNIFF SNIFF
WHO?
TELL ME WHERE SHE IS!
NOW!!


I ASSURE YOU --
-- ASKING ME ANY QUESTIONS --
-- IS ABOUT AS FRUITLESS AS --
-- ASKING THESE TREES!
THEN I'LL HAVE TO *HUFF!!!*
AND *PUFF!!*
OOOF
TIME FOR TALK IS OVER.


AND BLOW... OHHHH...
OHHHHH DEAR...
SHE'S GONE! SHE'S GONE!
A GIRL!?
WHAHAHHAH!!!
LISTEN TO ME, CHILD, EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OK...
GRANNY... SHE'S GONE... JUST GONE...
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY?
GRANNY *IS* MY FAMILY! THE WOLVES TOOK THE REST!
THEN WE WILL FIND YOUR GRANNY, WHEREVER SHE IS. THIS I VOW.
YOU WILL BE SAFE WITH ME.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS WHERE SHE MIGHT BE?
I DON'T KNOW...
DON'T WORRY, LITTLE ONE, WE'LL FIND HER...

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